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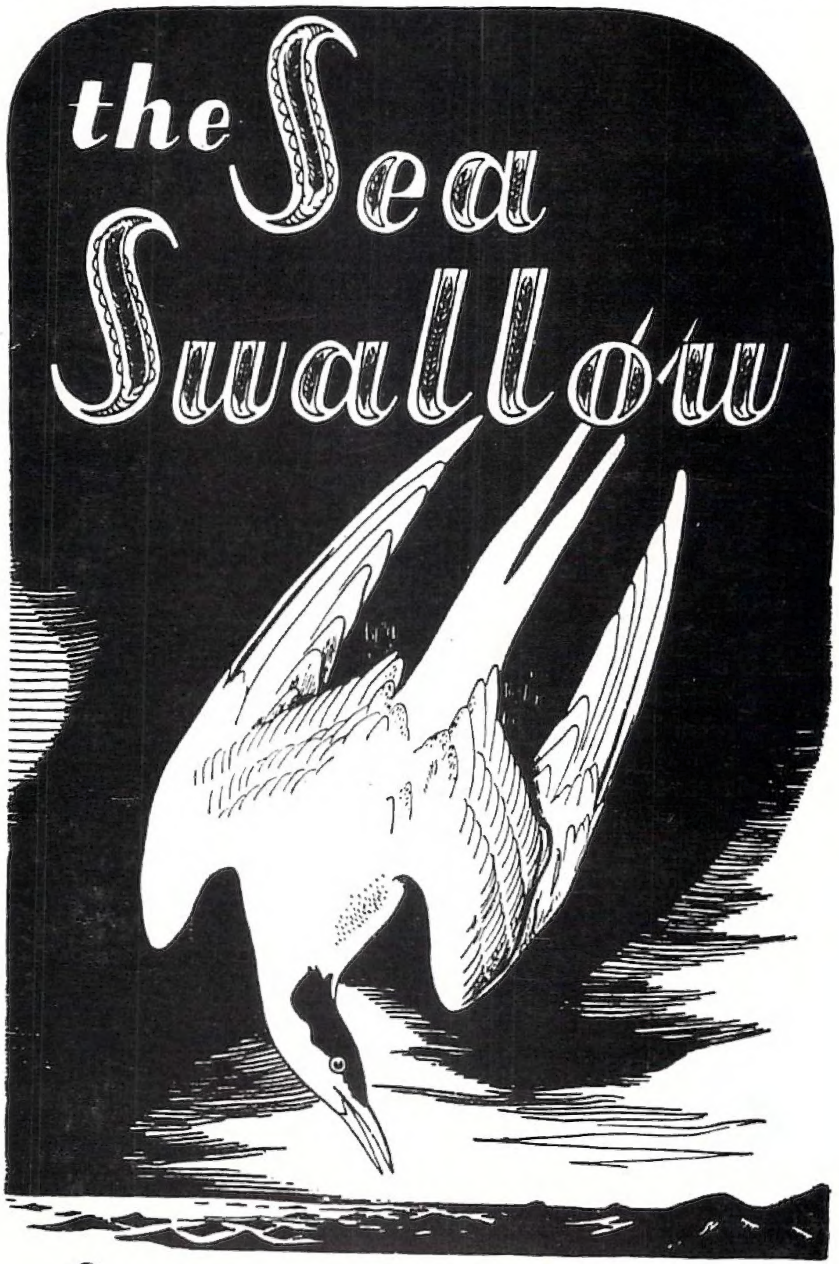
the Sea Swallow



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

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ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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For details of local representatives and other useful addresses see inside back cover.

Subscription rates. Full and Associate Members £8 (£7 if covenanted) annually. Library rates - Cost of *Sea Swallow* (£6) plus postage.

Membership has been widened from the R.N. to include all those who share a common background — the sea itself — regardless of nationality.*

Aims and activities. The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

RNBWS Record Forms. Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea, Seabird Census sheets, Bird examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are kept by Warrant Officer C. A. R. Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport, Hants. PO12 3DX. Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large stamped and addressed envelope.

Completed record forms (both seabirds and landbirds) should be sent to Michael Casement.

Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor (see instructions to authors inside back cover).

* An application form for membership is at page 71 in this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* eating a Fairy Tern *Gygis alba* aboard RV *Farnella* 120nm north of Laysan Is., Hawaii, 4 October 1991

Photo: Captain John Nicholls MN

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

I am conscious that Forewords and Editorials are the sort of stuff one tends to skim before getting to the meat within, but you can see this year's initiatives in the Chairman's note, and can no doubt recall Michael Casement's clarion call last year for new members, so perhaps my best introduction as the new President of the RNBWS is to report that we now have a small but flourishing presence in Naples, where there is much to see and plenty of good work to do, even though most of it is likely to fall outside the primary aims of exchanging information on seabirds and landbirds at sea. Our introductory effort appears elsewhere in this volume, and I hope that, like the starlings of RRS *Bransfield* ('Tailpiece' of Vol 40: Transatlantic Stowaway), the new RNBWS members 'have gone ashore and settled'.

This will in no way fill the boots of Peter Stanford, nor match his keen brain and birdman's eye, but it is a start, and a pleasing challenge.

David Dobbs

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

In 1991 the Society planned a number of new initiatives which were endorsed at the Annual General Meeting, and by the time you read this, the Society's first week-end meeting will have taken place - 4-5 September at Portland. This year sees the critical stage of building up momentum, and challenging commitment, without which our plans will not come to fruition.

Lieutenant Commander Gary Lewis has taken up the reins as the Expedition and Fieldwork Member of your Executive Committee, and has since been assessing support for an attractive programme of events. We know that we do not have the manpower base of our sister Services; and, perhaps, our philosophy in RNBWS is slightly different. We have certainly biassed our initial proposals to small parties with an emphasis on a practical contribution to local scientific fieldwork. The plan that our first expedition should assist the efforts of our Local Representative, Dr Frank Zino, and other ornithologists in the Madeiran Archipelago is framed in this vein. I hope to be reporting in next year's Foreword that our 6 - man team is in the field. Please do join in these exciting ventures if you can.

Meanwhile, the ORIENT 92 deployment is underway, and as a result of briefings at the Hydrographic Office which included a reminder of the importance of environmental observations, I am confident that we can look forward to some valuable reports. Kevin Morgan and I have also been able to include RNBWS input in the preparation of the 'Ocean Vigil' pack for the yachts in the 'BRITISH STEEL' Round the World Challenge. These two events seem to me to symbolise neatly the involvement of all seafarers in our work - not least the stalwarts whose reports have been listed in our Bulletin, and whose contributions to this journal will now be introduced by the Editor.

MICHAEL BARRITT, Chairman

EDITORIAL

This year's edition is an unusually varied and, I hope, interesting reflection of the activities of our membership worldwide, and introduces several new names among the long-term faithful contributors, including an article from our new President. Many thanks indeed.

But, as Captain Cheshire also notes in his analysis of seabird records, the number of members sending in routine observations from sea has declined in recent years, and this trend must be reversed, if the future health of our society is to be assured. There are a number of good reasons for this, but we do look to our readers to do their best to encourage new younger members. It is helpful if the standard forms are used, but the most important thing is to include the fullest identifying details. Computer print-outs are welcome from those who prefer to use these. On an encouraging note, the standard of reports reaching me from Met. Logs this year is noticeably high, especially concerning unusual landbirds; these are the observers we would like to welcome as members and regular reporters.

But I am pleased to include, albeit in rather abbreviated form, the excellent survey report of George Island, Falklands, from Petty Officer FitzPatrick, of H.M.S. *Active*; also the 'BTO/Leica List' report of the NE Atlantic from Captain Jackson; and yet another in the series from that forgotten part of the world - Papua New Guinea - from Captain Simpson. Nor have the desk-bound been idle - see the reminiscences from the MOD and from Naples.

But there is a serious underlying theme throughout this issue - the need for conservation. There is an increasing awareness that urgent measures must be taken to change our attitudes towards wildlife. And the first step towards any conservation measure is to know what there is to conserve. That is why our collective work is so important, for example Captain Simpson's keen and accurate observations, to provide an instant 'snapshot' of how things are now, before the habitat is lost for ever. The voice of people like him must be heard. That is also why I am pleased to find space to show an extract of Lieutenant Commander Cochrane's survey of a new coral islet off Diego Garcia.

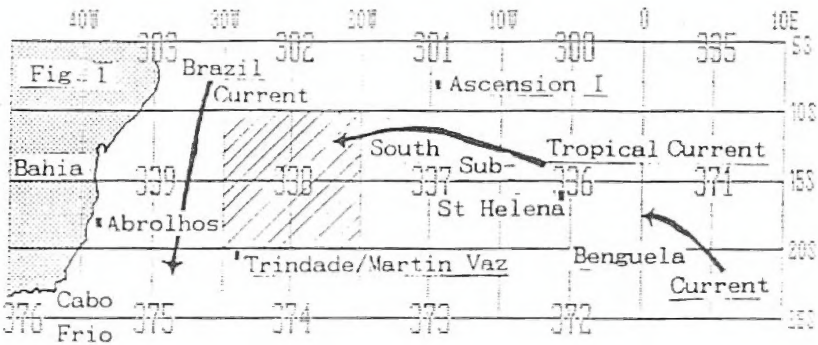
Michael Casement

SOME OBSERVATIONS IN WINTER IN THE TROPICAL SOUTH ATLANTIC

By Commander M.K. Barritt, RN.

Introduction

In the southern winter of 1990, regular observations of seabirds were made during a series of transects of the tropical South Atlantic between the latitude of Ascension Island and a line joining the aptly named Cold Capes (Cabo Frio) in Brazil and Namibia. The resultant records provide a comparison with the conclusions of classical accounts, Alexander (1928) and Murphy (1936), which were based on the 'METEOR' observations from ten profiles of the area in 1925-27.



Method of observation and discussion of limitations

The 1990 data-set is based on regular ten-minute watches, supplemented by many impromptu sightings recorded by Officers of the Watch (OOWs) in the '*Natural Phenomenon Log*' which is maintained as standard practice in HM Ships. The majority of the watchkeepers' records were of birds passing within a few cables of the ship, where their colour and movement against the background of sea and sky gave initial alert. Can any valid deductions on seabird status be drawn from these observations?

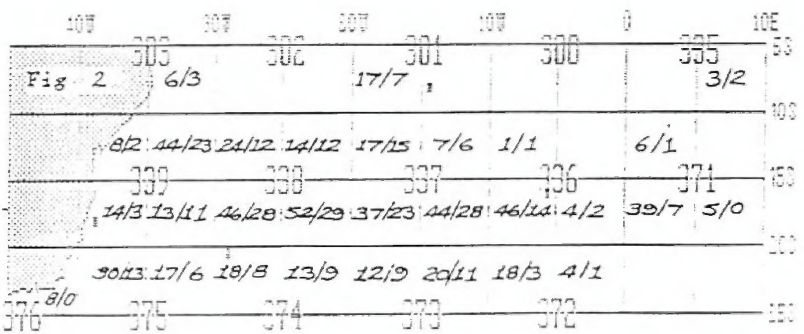
Theories of observational technique have been discussed by Bourne (1984). Government-funded surveys of the comparatively densely populated approaches to the UK have also stimulated critical analysis of data gathering and handling (Tasker *et al.*, 1987). Doubts about the thoroughness of the coverage of the outer part of the theoretical field of view from a ship platform, except in relatively calm conditions, were certainly supported by experience in the S. Atlantic, in an area where higher sea states generally prevailed. For example, Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* were observed in the wake when the ship ran down-wind, but were absent in the same area when the ship was steaming into the teeth of the Trade Winds; relative wind-speed is, of course, also a factor here. It became increasingly plain that these small birds were in the vicinity, but passed undetected until they came close or joined company.

Numerous instances occurred of birds and whales appearing from an apparently empty sea, after several days of 'Nil' reports, as soon as the ship slowed down or hove to. Sea travellers have often commented that smaller and slower vessels are better observing platforms (cf. Cherry-Garrard, 1965). The presence, during slow manoeuvres in a small area, of birds which had not been apparent at passage speed, may perhaps partly be explained by an association with the characteristic motion of fishing vessels. For example, a White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* flew around a towed target in use for a small-arms shoot, apparently oblivious to noise and ricochets. It also spent considerable periods on the water, close around the stern, whilst the ship was stopped and drifting.

Alexander (*op. cit.*) suggested that the passage of a ship churns up food for the birds which follow astern in areas of richer water. The attraction of species such as the Pintado Petrel *Daption capensis* to 'gash' is well-documented, and some species may be attracted by oily residues from outlets. All these explanations were consistent with the behaviour of groups of petrels and storm-petrels which attended our ship in 1990. They often appeared to drop astern over the wake and then move back into our wash. Occasionally, birds ranged a short distance ahead, but they were not observed to feed during such sorties.

One series of observations prompted the remark that a ship on passage might provide a focus for birds on transit through the area. During a careful lookout for fairly conspicuous groups of migrating Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, all birds sighted passed close up the side and close ahead, whilst none were seen to pass astern, or further ahead. Did these birds divert towards the ship during their migratory flight?

In general, it is considered that the observations reported here, in common with the amalgamated RNBWS sightings analysed annually in *Sea Swallow* do provide data on species distribution and on migration, but are not susceptible to analysis of density or abundance. However, the coverage of this sub-tropical zone is probably greater than ever achieved previously, with a weighting to latitudes 15°-20°S where 51% of observation serials took place. There is also a consistent pattern to those serials in which nothing was seen. The Marsden reporting grid is shown in Figure 1, with 10° square 338 shaded. Figure 2 shows the number of observation serials per 5° square of the Marsden grid, followed by the number of serials in which nothing was seen.



In the course of the 37,979 sea miles which were steamed in the area, one bird was seen per 35 n.m. (1 per 19km). The samples of populations seem reasonable. Thus, 63% of birds sighted were *Tubinares* in the southern part of the area, or on migration. *Sternidae*, mainly in the richer waters off SW Africa and Rio de Janeiro, formed 22%. The small overall totals of *Phaethontidae*, *Sulidae*, and *Stercorariidae* are striking. These are amongst the more conspicuous seabirds, and several species are notoriously curious and likely to approach ships. The figures therefore appear to emphasize the relatively small proportion which roam the deep ocean. All the Blue-faced Boobies *Sula dactylatra* which were sighted in Square 301 were juveniles - perhaps from the breeding population at Ascension Island. During the six months in this area, this was the only island at which we called, on one occasion only. This remoteness from land is underlined by the absence of any sightings of *Fregatidae* or *Laridae*.

Natural conditions

One test of the picture in Figure 2 and the species table is to match this with the environment, which, our oceanographic observations suggested, has remained stable in the 60 years since the METEOR expedition. Observed values of sea surface temperature throughout the area during winter 1990 were generally 0.5-1.0°C warmer than 1927 values from the 'METEOR Atlas', which are published on the British Admiralty Charts of monthly isotherms. Assuming that the increase has occurred smoothly through the intervening decades, this change is not dramatic. Man's impact is limited. Apart from local concentrations of urban gash in the strong currents off Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro, very little pollution was observed in the offshore and pelagic South Atlantic, certainly by contrast to the density of gash in the approaches to Europe from the latitude of the Tagus northwards. Monitoring, on behalf of the Governor of St. Helena, revealed no evidence of intensive fishing over the Mid-Atlantic Ridge by distant water fleets.

Water circulation. The Benguela divergence is the major circulation feature in the area, and some authorities, especially in fisheries research, define a region of Benguela Current Water extending right across the area to meet the waters of the Brazil Current. Plankton trawls in mid-ocean in April and May, in an area which had been described during an earlier watch as a typical 'light blue desert sea', revealed quantities of phytoplankton and zooplankton, especially blue copepods. White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria* sighted in the centre of the ocean in the northern part of the area, during markedly rough weather, were in company with groups of whales, possibly indicating availability of a common food source. The Benguela Water is certainly carried westward in the South Sub-tropical Current, and concentrations of southern petrels were seen in the SE part of this current during some transits. Apart from the Benguela region, standard texts indicate only one other concentration of richer phytoplankton, namely in the area of the Brazil Inshore Counter-current, which brings the cold water of the Falklands Current past Rio de Janeiro and Cabo Frio during the southern winter.

In general, the 1990 bird observations are consistent with a division between these zones of rich nutrition in the dynamic counter-clockwise

circulation sustained by the Trade Winds, and a comparatively lifeless central ocean area of light and variable currents. Thus, in the band 15°-20°S, when outside Benguela and South American offshore waters, the high proportion of serials in which nothing was seen is clear. In particular, between 25° and 30°W, although 85 birds were seen, 61% of serials produced 'Nil' records. A fall in sea surface temperature (SST) was associated with observed distribution of some species. Squares 336, 337 and 338 had been regularly traversed since April without sighting any Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. They were observed in the same area in September-October, when SST had dropped to 22-24°C, and one of the odd sightings earlier in the year also occurred when water temperature had dropped from 24-26° to 21.5°C.

Significance of prevailing weather. The main part of the area is swept by the SE Trades, which produce a light to moderate swell. Occasionally, the Mid-Atlantic High is split in the area of longitude 20°W by a tongue of low pressure from the wind-belts of the Southern Ocean. This can produce wind shifts. A long S-SW swell was invariably experienced here. In the SE of the area, the modifying effect of the Benguela Current on the climate was noted. SST drops by 4°C as the influence of the great body of southern water is entered. Heavy swell was encountered after the passage of depressions to the south, in the '*Roaring Forties*'. The swell and high seas brought more birds into the vicinity of the ship.

In the west of the area, in the approaches to the South American coast, the effects were felt of strong vortices associated with the Tropical Upper Tropospheric Trough. The resultant swell and heavy seas brought incursions of southern ocean bird species. The northward passage of shearwaters was also observed during such disturbed weather. There was some evidence from sightings of *Procellariidae* to suggest that appearance of birds was principally linked with prevailing weather and resultant sea conditions, and that swell may be a more significant factor in distribution than indicated in standard guides. For example, sightings of Pintado Petrels, White-chinned Petrels, and Soft-Plumaged Petrels *Pterodroma mollis* were made in the eastern part of the ocean in latitude 21°S, during a period of cold, overcast conditions attended by Force 5-6 SE winds and moderate swell. The birds vanished when fairer conditions prevailed. Weather was certainly more significant in sightings of White-chinned Petrels north of 20°S, where SST indicated that the birds were outside the zone of colder, richer water.

SPECIES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
303NE					1 Oc								5 Oc			
301NW				1 Jy									1 Jy	4 Jy		
335NE				1 Ap												
339NW				2 M	5 M											
339NE		3 S	3 S	1M, 1S	34 S	1 S	1 S				3 S		1 S			
338NW					23 S								7 Oc		1 S	2 S
338NE														3 Jy		
337NW												1 Ap		1 Jy		
337NE															1 Ap	
371NW				2 Ap												
339SW		1 Oc			33 Oc		54 Oc		1 Jn		3 Oc					
339SE																
338SW				21 M	45 M						6 M		1 S	1 Jy	1 M	
338SE		1 S	1 M, 1 S	1 M	16 M				1 Jn				4 S, 2 Oc			
337SW		1 S		3 M	7 M								6 S, 2 Oc			
337SE			1Au, 1 Oc		8 M, 1 Oc						5 Au		1 Au, 3 S, 2 Oc		1 M	, 2 S
336SW			1Jn, 15Au, 1 S						1 Au		2 Jn, 25 Au	1 Au	1 Jn, 1 S, 4 Oc			1 Oc
336SE															5 Ap	
371SW			6 Ap	18 Ap	8 Ap			3 Ap				1 Ap			43 Ap	
371SE				21 Ap											2 Ap	
376NE	8Jn, 18Jy				2 M											
375NW	1 Jy	5 Jy	1 M	3 Jn	71M, 6Jn				3 Jn		1 Au					
375NE		2 Au		11M, 2Au	5 M				2 Au		2 Au					
374NW			1 Au		14 Jn				2 Jy	1 Au	1 Jy					
374NE					1 Jn						1Jn, 2Jy					
373NW							2 Jy		1 Jy		1 Jy					
373NE		3 Au	1 Jy						2 Jy		2 Jy					
372NW	1 Jy	4 Au	5 Au		1 Jn						8 Jy, 39 Au					
372NE		5 Au	1 Au								15 Au					

	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
303NE																
301NW		4 Jy				1 M						4 Jy			1 Jy	
339NW						1 M	1 Oc									
339NE			1 M				1 M		1 S							
338NW		1 S			1Ap, 1 Oc											
371NW													1 Ap	1 Ap		
339SW		1Jn, 1 Oc						15 Oc								
339SE							5 Oc		1 Oc							
338SW		1 Jy, 1 S										1 S				
338SE									15, 1 Oc							
337SW							1 S		1 Oc							
337SE									15, 1 Oc							
336SW	1 Jn			1 Ap					3 Oc							6 Ap
371SW						4 Ap	3 Ap		23 Ap	3 Ap	26 Ap			4 Ap		
371SE																
376NE												6 Ju				
375NW		1 Jn	1 Jy									53 Au				
375NE		2 Jn														
374NW		1 Jn	1 Au													
372NE																

Distribution of species

The observations are tabulated by 5° Marsden square, for species 1-32, as shown in the species list (see next page). The number of birds sighted is followed by a code indicating the month - April(Ap), May(M), Jun(Jn), Jul(Jy), Aug(Au), Sep(S), Oct(Oc), Nov(N).

Species list

(**NOTE** (U) = identification uncertain)

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

1. Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*.

PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIIDAE*

2. Pintado Petrel *Daption capense*.
3. White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*.
4. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*.

The observations in 371 were all made in April.Some birds were reported as flying southwards, but the majority were feeding in tropical bird groups over fish shoals in the area. A plankton-trawl in the area revealed a rich haul of phytoplankton and zooplankton. Life was also apparent in the surface film of the water. Several squid were also sighted. This square was not revisited later in the year. The sightings in 375 and 338 in May and June, were largely of birds migrating N. One bird in 339 and the 3 birds in 337 were all flying NW in May. Other birds in 339 in late June, in inshore waters, did not appear to be on migration.

5. Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. The birds in 375 and 338 in May, and those in 374 in June, were migrating N-NW. Those in 337 in May, possibly of the Tristan da Cunha population, were moving NW. The birds in 339, in the coastal waters of Bahia, did not appear to be migrating. One group followed in the wake. The return migration in September and October is reflected in 338 and 339.
6. Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*.
7. Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. The sightings in 339 were of birds on migration in groups flying strongly and purposefully southwards. Large numbers of this species have been reported in this area during other voyages in October (Meeth, unpublished MS).
8. Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. (U)
9. Schlegel's Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*.
10. Trinidad Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*.
11. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*.
12. Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*.

STORM-PETRELS *HYDROBATIDAE*

The absence of any sightings of storm-petrels south of 20°S is remarkable.

13. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*.
14. White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*.
15. Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*.

TROPICBIRDS *PHAETHONTIDAE*

16. Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*.
17. White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*. (U)

BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

18. Blue-faced Booby *Sula dactylatra.*
19. Red-footed Booby *Sula sula.*
20. Brown booby *Sula leucogaster.*

SKUAS *STERCORARIIDAE*

21. McCormick's Skua *Catharacta maccormicki.*
22. Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus.*
23. Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus.*

TERNS AND NODDIES *STERNIDAE*

24. South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea.*
25. Common/Arctic Tern *Sterna hirundo/paradisea.*
26. Wreathed Tern *Sterna vittata.* (U)
27. Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii.*
28. Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata.*
29. Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum.*
30. Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis.* (U).
31. Common Noddy *Anous stolidus.*
32. White Tern *Gygis alba.*

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, the observations in 1990 supported the classical view of 'the poverty of tropical bird life off soundings' (Murphy, *op. cit.*) compared with the richness of pelagic birds in cooler latitudes. However, distribution of some petrel species e.g. the White-chinned Petrel extends further north during the southern winter than suggested in the standard field guides. Prevailing weather and sea state, rather than water mass, may be the controlling factor in this. More positively, there was no indication from comparison with the general descriptions in the references that we saw fewer birds than were recorded 60 years previously. The full records, and more detailed analysis by species, are held by the author and in the RNBWS data-bank.

Commander M. K. Barritt, Royal Navy, Spring House, Claypits Farm, Upottery, EX14 9QP.

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NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED IN 1991

By Captain N.G.Cheshire, MN.

The number of reports received in 1991 was regrettably well down on previous years. The distribution of observer effort was: North Atlantic 47%, South Atlantic 13%, Caribbean 1%, South Pacific 8%, North Pacific 15%, South Indian Ocean 2%, North Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf/Red Sea 12%, Mediterranean 2%. All observers who contributed are thanked for their interesting reports.

OBSERVERS SENDING NOTES DURING 1991

CPO.I.M.Calderwood RN HM.Submarine. Portsmouth-Falklands-Takahuano, Chile-Valparaiso-Panama-Fort Lauderdale-Georgia-Plymouth. Feb'90-Aug'90 (24R,1P).

Signalman R.D.Ellis RFA *Olmeda*. North Atlantic-Irish Sea (2C).

Radio Officer M.G.Finn MV *Dock Express 20* Balboa-Kaohsiung-Singapore-Boston via South Africa. Nov'90-Jan'91; MV *Marigola*. Red Sea-Iran-Bombay-Al Jubail-Suez-Gibraltar. Mar-May'91. Gibraltar-Suez-Tuticorin-Red Sea-Bombay-Singapore-Suez. May-Aug'91 (13C).

POMA P.K.FitzPatrick HMS *Active* . U.K. Coastal waters Sept-Oct'91 (2R).

R.Kirkwood RMS *St.Helena* Capetown-St.Helena-Avonmouth Oct-Nov'89 (14N).

Chief Officer M.C.Littlewood MV *London Spirit*. Multiple voyages from Guaymas/La Libertad Mexico-Los Angeles/San Francisco (15R, 2 computer tables).

Chief Officer A.R.Louch RRS *Charles Darwin*. Dakar-Tenerife-Dakar Jan-Feb'91, Barry-Pta.Delgada-Barry Apr-Jun'91, Barry-NE Atlantic-Troon Jun-Jul'91, Troon-NE Atlantic-Barry-NE Atlantic-Newport. Sept-Oct'91. (13C).

Met Staff OWS *Cumulus* Multiple voyages Greenock-Ocean Station *Lima* Feb-Apr'91, Sept-Dec'91, Milford Haven-Ocean Station *Lima* Jul'91. (10C).

R.Prytherch Yacht *Speedwell* Salcombe-Scillies and return Jul'91(4N + Map).

A.H.Todd RFA *Olna*. Persian Gulf-Djibouti Nov-Dec'90, Singapore-Persian Gulf Mar'91 (2R).

Ms. A.Watson Yacht *Simanda*. Poole-Azores (2R) May-Jun'91.

Key. R-RNBWS Report Sheets, C-RNBWS Census Sheets, B-RNBWS Bird in hand Forms, N-other notes, P-Photographs.

RNBWS sea-going members have unique opportunities to make an on-going contribution to our knowledge of birds at sea. Although the general distribution of most seabirds is now known (thanks in no small part to the efforts of RNBWS members over the years) there are still many areas of the world that have had little attention, and there are discoveries to be made. There is much to learn about the behaviour of birds at sea, their feeding patterns, flocking, relationships with oceanographic processes etc. Regular systematic observations from a particular sea area can yield interesting results.

Those members sending in reports should bear in mind that the value of any observation is enhanced by including the additional information requested on the report and census sheets. Those using the census sheets should use observation periods that are multiples of ten minutes.

NOTES ON SPECIES

PENGUINS *SPHENISCIDAE*

Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*. Several rafts of 15 to 30 birds, c.100 in total reported by IMC at 32°S 72°W, NW of Valparaiso on 15 Jun'90.

Magellan Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*. IMC reported seven at 35°S 73°W on 14 Jun'90.

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. On passage from Capetown to St.Helena, RK saw occasional birds, with the last at 22.4°S 03.1°W on 28 Oct'89. Southbound for the Falklands IMC saw his first at 37.8°S 40.7°W on 20 Mar'90. On a voyage from the Falklands to Panama via west coast South America his last report was of two at 57°S 63°W in Drake Passage on 31 May'90. Development and maturing of Wandering Albatross plumage has been described for Crozet I. birds by Weimerskirch *et al* (1989).

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. Three reports from IMC - six birds at 58°S 67°W in Drake Passage on 1 Jun'90, five at 43.5°S 75°W off S.Chile on 5 Jun'90 and three the next day at 40°S 75°W.

Waved Albatross *Diomedea irrorata*. Two reports of this tropical albatross from IMC who saw two at 09°S 81°W off Peru on 20 Jun'90 and five the following day at 03°S 82°W.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata*, SE Tasmania, 21 January 1990

Photo: Captain Neil Cheshire MN

Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*. During a voyage from Panama to Taiwan MGF saw the first at 21.3°N 156.6°W near Hawaii on the 15 Nov'90. There were several records of singles or pairs by MCL from the west coast USA/Mexico between May and Aug with the most southerly at 28.6°N 116.3°W off Cedros I. on 21 Aug'91.

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*. From late May until the end of Aug'91 in west coast USA/Mexican waters MCL had a single record of one at 34.4°N 121.1°W off California on 14 Jul'91. A few recent sightings in the northern Gulf of California have been documented by Newcomer and Silber (1989).

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Several reports from the normal South Atlantic and eastern South Pacific ranges (RK.IMC) including 30 reported by IMC at 51°S 56°W NE of the Falklands on 24 Mar'90.

Bullers Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*. One reported without details at 13°S 78°W off Peru on 19 Jun'90 by IMC.

Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*. IMC reported three from 57°S 63°W, Drake Passage on 31 May'90 and another the next day at 58°S 67°W.

FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS

PROCELLARIIDAE

Giant Petrel *Macronectes* sp. Observed by IMC in the South Atlantic and off the west coast of South America. His first when southbound for the Falklands, reported as *halli*, was seen at 37.8°S 40.7°W on 20 Mar'90 and his last, a *giganetus*, was seen at 35°S 73°W on 14 Jun'90.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. As usual many records from the North Atlantic. Of note, were 38 seen by ARL when the sea temperature fell as his vessel approached the area of the polar convergence at 50.8°N 32.9°W on 23 May'91, the 250 he counted in an hour at 63.5°N 21.4°W off SW Iceland on the 21 Jun'91 and c.200 seen in an hour including three dark phase birds at 62.3°N 04.9°W between Shetland and the Faroes on 8 Sep'91. RDE had many records off NW Scotland including a feeding flock of 200 around trawlers at 58.2°N 08.3°W, NE of St. Kilda on 6 Nov '90. Inshore off Cornwall, RP saw 12 between Lizard Head and Eddystone Rock. on 19 Jul'91.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialoides*. IMC reported 18 in Drake Passage at 57°S 63°W on 31 May'91, and 18 the next day at 58°S 67°W. Further north off the coast of Chile, he saw 12 at 43°S 75°W on 5 Jun'90 and 15 at 32°S 72°W on 15 Jun'90.

Cape Pigeon (or Pintado Petrel) *Daption capense*. Several records from IMC in Drake Passage, then northwards along the Chilean coast during June 1990, with a final sighting of one at 13°S 78°W off Peru on the 19th.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. Single birds were seen by RK between Capetown and St.Helena at 23.9°S 05.0°E on 28 Oct '89, at 22.4°S 03.1°E the same day, and at 19.9°S 00.2°W on the 29th.

White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*. A single bird was seen by IMC at 43.5°S 75°W off Chile on 5 Jun'90.

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. On a voyage south to the Falklands, IMC reported this species on three successive days with three at 35°S 37.8°W on the 19th, 24 at 37.8°S 40.7°W on 20th and five at 41.3°S 44.5°W on 21 Mar'90.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. In the South Atlantic IMC saw one at 37.8°S 40.7°W on 20 Mar'90 and 16 at 49°S 50°W on 23 Mar'90. Further east RK had several records between Capetown and St.Helena during late Oct '89 with the most northerly sighting being one at 22.4°S 03.1°E on the 28th. Identification of this species has recently been discussed in detail by J.W.Enticott (1991). (COMMENT by WRPB. Unfortunately, in common with the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, (who give the wrong reference), he omits to mention that reports that the supposed southern races appear to be colour-phases of a polymorphic species which occur together at most breeding colonies. (Bourne 1983.))

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. In the Atlantic area, ARL reported two at 03.9°N 00.4°W off Ghana on 26 Jan'91, IMC reported one at 07°N 15°W on 5 Mar'90, another at 16°S 20°W on 14 Mar and three well south at 24.1°S 28.2°W on 16 Mar'90. RK described one seen at 03.8°S 15.2°W on 5 Nov'89 and another seen at 20.9°N 17.7°W off Mauretania on 9 Nov'90. In the Indian Ocean there were three tentative reports from MGF - one flying close to the sea surface at 05.8°N 96.3°E near N. Sumatra on 25 Jul'91, another 50nm SW of Colombo on 29 Jul'91 and one at 08.2°N 65°E. on 2 Aug'91.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*. MGF saw two NW from Socotra on 5 Aug'91 and two the next day at 12°N 49.2°E in the Gulf of Aden, soaring to about 10m above the sea. Further east MGF saw 20 birds he thought were either this species or Bulwer's Petrel at 10.5N 75.5E off SW India on 13 Jul'91. Van den Berg *et al* (1991) have recently published several records of Jouanin's Petrel seen off southern India and further to the east in June/July 1984/5.

Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. IMC reported one at 37.8°S 40.7°W and two at 49°S 50°W in the South Atlantic on the 20th and 23 Mar'90.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. In South African waters, MGF recorded six at 34.9°S 23.5°W on 9 Jan'91 and three 70nm NW from Capetown the following day. RK supplied a series of records whilst on passage from Capetown to St.Helena with a max. count and final sighting of 25 at 18.4°S 02.2°W on 29 Oct'89. To the west, IMC reported his first one when southbound at 37.8°S 40.7°W on 20 Mar'90. Later when northbound off Chile, he saw small numbers most days including 16 at 43.5°S 75°W on 5 Jun'90, and off Peru two at 13°S 78°W and two at 09°S 81°W on 19/20 Jun'90 in the cool Humboldt Current.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Many records from the normal North Atlantic and Mediterranean range. ARL provided a series of interesting winter records from West Africa/Gulf of Guinea during Jan'91 including five at 13.6°N 17.4°W off Gambia on the 6th, one the next day at 09.4°N 15.9°W , and in Ghanaian waters a count of 32 in 20 min at 04.6°N 01.6°W on the 11th, 18 at 05.1°N 00.3°W on 12th, seven at 04.5°N 00.7°W on the 13th, five at 04.5°N 00.7°W on 14th,

one at 04.8°N 00.7°W on 24th and 25 at 04.9°N 00.8°W on 25 Jan'91. RK saw 30 at 09.1°N 17.3°W off Guinea on 7 Nov'89 and 'hundreds' the following day at 15.1°N 17.6°W near Dakar. IMC reported two birds at 31°N 81°W near the Georgia USA coast on the 13 Jul'90. In the Indian Ocean MGF described one seen at 28.7°S 57.7°E well south of Mauritius on 3 Jan'91.

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*. There was a report of seven at 36.9°N 122.4°W off California on 14 Jul'91 and two the next day at 29.2°N 116.9°W by MCL. IMC reported seven at 09°S 81°W off Peru on 20 Jun'90 and three at 03°S 82°W the next day.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. ARL had two early records from the central Atlantic with 37 counted in an hour at 50.8°N 32.9°W near the 'Polar Front' on 23 May'91, and one the next day at 54°N 30°W. Autumn records included c.300 seen by ARL at 50°N 11.1°W, SW of Ireland on 4 Oct'91 and one described by RK from 15.1°N 17.6°W off Dakar on 8 Nov'89.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*. Three were reported by AHT 45nm east of the Kuria Muria Islands on 2 Dec'90, a late date for the species here, indicating possible confusion with Jouanin's Petrel.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. Several recorded in the eastern North Atlantic from May-Oct mainly by ARL who saw one well north at 62.3°N 05.1°W east of the Faroes on 24 Sep'91. RK saw several at 31.6°S 15.4°E off South Africa on 26 Oct '89. He also described one seen at 19.9°S 00.2°W on 29 Oct'89 and two at 15.1°N 17.6°W near Dakar on 8 Nov'89. In Californian waters MCL saw several large flocks between May and July including 2,500 at 37.1°N 122.5°W on 14 Jul'91. IMC reported 2,000 over-wintering birds at 35°S 73°W SW of Valparaiso on 14 Jul'90 and nine the next day at 32°S 72°W.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. In mid-Atlantic ARL saw one at 45.4°N 31.4°W on 21 May'91. He also had an interesting record of one with 'black upperparts' at 05.1°N 00.3°W near Ghana on 12 Jan'91. IMC reported one at 15.7°N 18°W off Senegal on 3 Mar'90 and RK saw one at 30.9°N 15.1°W NE of the Canaries on 11 Nov'89. Inshore off Cornwall RP saw 18 SW of Rame Head on 15 Jul'91, 21 off Falmouth Bay the next day and counted 10 between the Lizard and Eddystone Rock on 19 Jul'91.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus l'herminieri*. IMC reported 13 at 24°N 79°W, west of the Bahamas on 1 Jul'90, one at 31°N 81°W NE of Jacksonville on 13 Jul'90 and another at 33°N 74°W, SSE from C. Hatteras on 20 Jul'90. In the Straits of Hormuz AHT reported two on the 29 Nov'90.

STORM-PETRELS *HYDROBATIDAE*

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. RK made a series of observations in the eastern South Atlantic, describing three that followed his ship at 27.3°S 09.5°E on 27 Oct'89, one at 23.9°S 05.0°E and two at 23.4°S 04.4°E on the 28th, one ship - following at 19.9°S 00.2°W on the 29th and two following at 03.1°N 16.6°W on 6 Nov'89. Further west, IMC reported three at 37.8°S 40.7°W on 20 Mar'90, one at 49°S

50°W on 23 Mar and 11 at 51°S 56°W, NE of the Falklands on 24 Mar'90. In June he recorded the species almost every day when northbound off the west coast of South America, including observations of 11 at 32°S 72°W off Chile on the 15th, three at 09°S 81°W off Peru on 20th, seven at 03°S 82°W off Ecuador on the 21st, and three on the equator at 81°W the next day. Off the coast of California where it is rarely seen, MCL positively identified one that followed his ship for ten minutes at 32.8°N 119.7°W on 24 Jul'91. In the North Indian Ocean MGF saw one 60nm SW Colombo on 14 Jul'91, four following in the wake the next day at 05.8°N 84.3°E, SE of Sri Lanka and two at 05.9°N 89.7°E on 16 Jul'91. There is now a record of one ashore in Iceland in breeding condition on 31 Jul'88 (Hilmarsson and Hansen 1989).

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. One was reported at 31°N 15°W, NE of the Canaries on 28 Feb'90 (IMC).

White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*/**Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *F. tropica*. MGF had a *Fregetta*-type storm-petrel with a white belly aboard, 100nm N of St.Helena on 15 Jan'91. RK saw one with a white belly at 03.8°S 15.2°W on 5 Nov'89. IMC saw two white-bellied types at 24°S 75°W off Chile on 17 Jun'90, and eight the next day at 18°S 78°W. If these species are found aboard, RNBWS Bird in the Hand Forms would be well received.

Grey-backed Storm-petrel *Garrodia nereis*. One was reported from 49°S 50°W by IMC on 23 Mar'90. The next day he saw nine attracted to rafts of kelp at 51°S 56°W, NE of the Falklands and another seven on 31 May at 57°S 63°W in Drake Passage.

Hornby's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma hornbyi*. There were two reports from IMC of the species from the normal Humboldt range with eight at 13°S 78°W off Peru on 19 Jun'90 and three the following day at 09°S 81°W.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*, east of Tasmania, 5 December 1988. (Note feet extending beyond tail)

*Photo:*Captain Neil Cheshire MN

British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. Scattered summer and autumn records by ARL from the eastern North Atlantic, usually of single birds. His observations included a flock of six at 51°N 16°W on 6 Jun'91 and two singles at 62.8°N 04.7°W, E of the Faroes on 17 Sep'91. He also reported a migrant at 04.5°N 00.7°W off Ghana on 13 Jan'91. Inshore off Cornwall, RP counted 12 between the Lizard and Eddystone Rock on 19 Jul'91 and saw eight more just east of this area the same day. The species has now been recorded from Turkey during April 1988 (Haass 1990).

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. In the tropical Atlantic, RK reported two at 03.8°S 15.2°W and one at 03.0°S 15.4°W on 5 Nov'89. IMC reported six at 7°N 15°W off Sierra Leone on 5 Mar'90 and one (without details) at 16°N 76°W in the Caribbean on 28 Jun'90. There are a few previous summer records from the Gulf of Mexico. IMC also reported the species in small numbers between 13°S-2°N, 78-82°W off the west coast of South America, 19-23 Jun'90.

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. There were several reports of wintering birds by ARL from the Gulf of Guinea and nearby, including two at 03.3°N 02.9°W on 29 Jan'91, one at 04.2°N 04.2°W on 31st, one at 03.7°N 08.3°W on 1 Feb, and four at 08.6°N 15.7°W on 3 Feb'91. Further west, IMC reported two on the equator at 15°W on 7 Mar'90, three the next day at 06°S 15°W and one at 08°S 15°W near Ascension I. on 12 Mar'90. MGF described two with partially divided white rumps seen at 18.8°N 123.9°W in the eastern N.Pacific on 10 Nov'90. IMC reported 12 fork-tailed long-winged white-rumped storm-petrels identified as this species at 18°S 78°W off Peru on 18 Jun'90.

Markham's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma markhami*. IMC tentatively identified 11 dark-rumped storm-petrels similar in size and flight and in the same flock as the Leach's mentioned above, as Markham's. He also supplied a photograph, but despite this it is not clear if Markham's or dark-rumped Leach's were involved. He reported seeing nine similar dark storm-petrels at 13°S 78°W on 19 Jun'90 and seven the next day at 09°S 81°W.

Ashy Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma homochroa*. One was described by MCL from 29.8°N 117.7°W off Baja California on 6 Jun'91.

Black Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma melania*. MCL described 12 seen at 28°N 116.1°W off Baja California on 6 Jun'91.

TROPICBIRDS *PHAETHONTIDAE*

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*. One was seen by RK at 15.1°N 17.6°W off Dakar on 8 Nov'89. IMC saw two south of the normal range at 28°S 74°W off Chile on 16 Jun'90, five at 13°S 78°W on 19th, four on the equator at 81°W on 22nd and eight at 02°N 79°W off Ecuador on 23 Jun'90. There is one report from the Arabian Sea of a single bird seen by MGF at 16.7°N 55.1°E on 25 Apr'91.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*. Single birds were seen by IMC at 6°S 15°W, N of Ascension I. on 8 Mar'90, at 33°N 74°W, SSE of C. Hatteras on 20 Jul'90 and at 34°N 69°W, NW of Bermuda on 21 Jul'90.

PELICANS *PELECANIDAE*

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Three were seen by MCL flying above a school of dolphins at 35.3°N 121.5°W, 25nm off the Californian coast on 12 Aug'91. Another followed his ship for a few minutes at 27.9°N 115.9°W, 28nm off Cedros I. Mexico on 27 Aug'91.

Peruvian Pelican *Pelecanus thagus*. IMC saw eight from the southern end of its range off Chile at 35°S 73°W on 14 Jun'90, and 36 the next day at 32°S 72°W.

GANNETS AND BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*. Wintering birds were seen off Mauretania by RK who counted c.100 around fishing boats at 20.9°N 17.7°W on 9 Nov'89 and IMC who saw two at 18°N 18°W on 2 Mar'90.

Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*. Small numbers were recorded off the west coast of South America by IMC between 13°S and the equator , 78°W-82°W from 19-22 Jun'90.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. There were many records from the normal range in tropical seas. MCL had several records off the west coast of Mexico including an adult at 23.5°S 109.3°W at the entrance to the Gulf of California on 17 Jul'91. MGF recorded a sub-adult at 21.3°N 169.4°W, SW from Hawaii on 17 Nov'90. In the Arabian Sea MGF saw 20 adults flying east at 17.1°N 57.6°E near the Kuria Muria Is. on 27 Mar'91 and a feeding flock of 20 adults at 12.5°N 53°E in the Gulf of Aden on 4 Jul'90. Further east he saw one sub-adult at 6°N 95°E off N. Sumatra on 17 Jul'91.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. In the eastern tropical Pacific, MGF saw three immatures at 13°N 99.5°W two of which roosted on the foremast overnight. He saw an adult at 21.3°N 156.6°W, east of Hawaii on 15 Nov'90. In the eastern Indian Ocean he had four immatures roosting aboard 140nm SW of Cocos-Keeling Is. on 27 Dec'90.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*, N. Tasman Sea, September 1989

Photo: Captain Neil Cheshire MN

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Panama, Pacific coast, 19 December 1986

Photo: Chief Officer Bengt Grandin Sw MN

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. Scattered reports from the tropical oceans,(IMC,MCL,MGF). An adult and an immature were seen by MCL catching flying fish disturbed by the bow wave at 25.5°N 110°W in the Gulf of California on 13 Jun'91. He also recorded 15 (3 Ad, 12 Imm) around his ship at anchor off Guaymas Mexico, 27.9°N 110.9°W on 18 Jul'91. MGF saw 12 (8 ad, 4 imm) at 07.5°N 82.9°W, S of Costa Rica on 3 Nov'90.

CORMORANTS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*. MCL had an immature land on his ship and stay for several hours at 31.4°N 118.7°W, 55nm SW of San Clemente I. California on 26 Aug'91.

Common Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. AHT saw 12 in breeding plumage flying north at 27.8°N 49.9°E in the northern Persian Gulf on 13 Mar'91.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*. In the Persian Gulf AHT saw 10 off Jebel Ali on 11 Nov'90 and an immense flock of several thousands off Dubai on 29 Nov'90.

FRIGATEBIRDS *FREGATIDAE*

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. Three reports from the Gulf of California from MCL who saw one at 25°N 109.9°W on 28 May'91 and another at 22.9°N 109.7°W on 17 Jul'91. He had eight in sight most of the day when his ship was at anchor off Guaymas, Mexico on 18 Jul'91. Further south IMC reported two on the equator at 81°W on 22 Jun'90 and five more the next day at 02°N 79°W.

PHALAROPES *PHALAROPODIDAE*

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. There were several reports from the wintering area in West African waters. IMC saw 24 at 23°N 17°W

off Mauritania on 1 Mar'90, 350 at 15.7°N 18°W on 3 Mar'90, 20 at 11°N 17°W on 4 Mar'90 and one at 07°N 15°W off Sierra Leone the following day. ARL reported one at 04.2°N 04.0°W off the Ivory Coast on 10 Jan'91. RK described and sketched in detail birds seen in the productive upwelling area at 20.9°N 17.7°W off Mauritania on 9 Nov'89 where there were flocks of up to 100 and a total count of c.500.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. AHT reported a flock of 70+ at 26.7°N 51.3°E in the central Persian Gulf on 12 Mar'91. MGF saw two flocks of 20 *Phalaropus* sp. at 25.9°N 56.8°E, Straits of Hormuz on 17 Apr.'91.

SKUAS AND JAEGERS *STERCORARIIDAE*

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. Many records of mainly single birds from the NE Atlantic (ARL,IMC,RDE). In position 63.5°N 21.4°W off SW Iceland, ARL recorded eight in an hour on 21 Jun'91 and saw three in an hour at 46.4°N 12.6°W on 17 Oct'91. IMC saw three at 42°N 40°W On 26 Jul'90. He saw two at 23°N 17°W off Mauretania on 1 Mar'90. RK saw 'a large brown skua with a slightly paler nape' at 15.1°N 17.6°W near Dakar on 8 Nov'89. The differences between the large skuas have recently been discussed by Gauntlett and Harrap (1992).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. Most reports were from the wintering area off West Africa. ARL reported 46 in groups at 13.6°N 17.4°W off Gambia on 6 Jan'91 and made a series of observations in Ghanaian waters including eight at 04.5°N 01.6°W on 11th, eight the next day at 05.1°N 00.3°W, two at 04.5°N 00.7°W on 13th and 15 at 04.9°N 00.6°W on 25 Jan'91. RK saw one with full spoon tail at 15.1°N 17.6°W off Dakar on 8 Nov'89 and c.40 variably plumaged birds of which two retained full tails at 20.9°N 17.7°W off Mauritania the next day.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. A tentative record from MCL of a small skua at 31.6°N 118.8°W off Baja California on 15 Jul'91. RK saw one with a Pomarine at 9.1°N 17.3°W off W.Africa on 7 Nov'89 and IMC reported one at 06°S 15°W on 8 Mar'90. ARL had several summer and autumn records from the eastern North Atlantic including four at 63.9°N 05.9°W near the Faroes on 14 Sep'91.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. ARL saw six near the Polar Convergence at 50.7°N 32.9°W in mid-Atlantic on 23 May'91. IMC saw three at 23°N 17°W on 1 Mar'90 and nine (5 Ad, 4 Imm) at 43°N 35°W on 27 Jul'90.

GULLS *LARIDAE*

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucopthalmus*. In the northern Red Sea MGF saw three at 26.8°N 34.4°E on 30 May'91 and one at 11.7°N 52.8°E near Socotra on 5 Jun'91. AHT saw them daily in Djibouti Hr. from 4-9 Dec'90 with a maximum count of 47.

Sooty (or Aden) Gull *Larus hemprichi*. In the Persian Gulf, AHT saw two adults and one first winter bird at 25.5°N 54.9°E on 10 Mar'91. MGF recorded one at 15.7°N 53°E off southern Oman on 26 Apr'91.

Common Gull *Larus canus*. Two at 63.5°N 21.4°W off SW Iceland on 21 Jun'91 (ARL).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*. A number of summer records from Iceland to the Western Approaches by ARL. He also saw one in mid-Atlantic at 54°N 30°W on 25 May'91, one at 39°N 26.7°W near the Azores on 15 May'91 and another nearby at 38.2°N 27.9°W on 18 May'91.

Western Gull *Larus occidentalis*. MCL saw two adults at 34.6°N 120.9°W, 10nm off the Californian coast on 31 May'91.

Southern Black-backed Gull *Larus dominicanus*. Four were seen well offshore at 58°S 67°W in Drake Passage by IMC, who also observed 13 at 35°S 73°W off Chile on 14 Jun'90 and five the next day at 32°S 72°W.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*. RDE saw 10 adults and two immatures at 58.2°N 08.3°W, NE of St.Kilda on 6 Nov'90.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. The Met. observers recorded two at 55.8°N 09.5°W, NW of Ireland, on 7 Feb'91 and one at 55.7°N 08.4°W on 11 Mar'91.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*. One in breeding plumage was seen by AHT at 27.5°N 50.4°E in the central Persian Gulf on 14 Mar'91.

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*. MGF saw 10 just outside Bombay Harbour entrance on 12 Apr'91.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. ARL recorded two well offshore SW of Iceland at 60.9°N 23°W on 24 Jun'91 and a first winter bird at 45.9°N 13.1°W on 19 Oct'91. There have been several records from New Guinea in recent years and now at last there is a record from Australia where an adult in summer plumage was photographed at Broome, Western Australia on 19 Oct'91 (Andrews and Eades 1991).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*. In the Persian Gulf MGF saw five adults whilst at anchor at Bandar Abbas on 29 Mar'91 and AHT saw 11 off Jebel Ali on 11 Nov'90.

Common (or Black-legged) Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. Many observations from RDE offshore from W. Scotland and Ireland from 4-21 Nov'90 with a maximum count of 50 immatures at 52.4°N 09.4°W off SW Ireland on 11 Nov'90. During this period the ratio of immatures to adults observed was 3:1. On a passage from South Africa to Boston USA, MGF saw the first, an immature, at 29.3°N 53.8°W on 27 Jan'91.

Swallow-tailed Gull *Larus furcatus*. Several reports from IMC from 19-23 Jun'90, 13°S-02°N, 78°W-82°W, with a maximum count of 14 at 02°N 79°W near Ecuador on the 23rd.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*. RK described birds seen off Dakar at 15.1°N 17.6°W on 8 Nov'89 and two seen the next day at 20.9°N 17.7°W. ARL saw an adult and an immature at 04.9°N 00.8°W off Ghana on 25 Jan'91.

TERNS *STERNIDAE*

Black Tern *Chlidonias nigra*. ARL made several observations during Jan'91 in the wintering area off West Africa with a flock of 33 at 04.3°N 09.1°W on the 9th, 25 at 4.6°N 00.4°W off Ghana on the 13th, three at 04.8°N 00.1°W on the 15th, two at 04.9°N 00.8°W on the 25th and two at 08.6°N 15.7°W off Guinea on the 3 Feb'91.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. One immature was reported by ARL from 09.4°N 15.9°W off Guinea on 7 Jan'91 and an adult at 04.5°N 00.7°W on 14 Jan'91.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. An adult in summer plumage was seen by IMC in mid-Atlantic at 44°N 30°W on 28 Jul'90.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. IMC reported two at 05°N 80°W off the Pacific coast of Colombia on 24 Jun'90 and 10 at 24°N 79°W west of the Bahamas on 1 Jul'90. MGF noted flocks of up to 20 terns with brown upperparts at 13.7°N 42.9°E in the S Red Sea on 2 Jun'91.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. Several reports from the Caribbean and tropical Atlantic. IMC saw 50 on the equator at 15°W on 7 Mar'90 and 50 at 24°N 79°W west of the Bahamas on 1 Jul'90. RK saw c.100 at 03.6°S 15.3°W on 5 Nov'89.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*. RK described two seen at 15.1°N 17.6°W off Dakar on 8 Nov'89.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. Two records of wintering birds - AHT saw one off Dubai in the Persian Gulf on 9 Mar'91 and RK saw 'several' at 15.1°N 17.6°W near Dakar on 8 Nov'89.

Common Noddy *Anous stolidus*. MGF had an adult aboard at 10.5°S 75.5°W off SW India on 13 Jul'91.

AUKS *ALCIDAE*

Common Guillemot. *Uria aalge*. Scattered records from the eastern North Atlantic by ARL. In Californian waters MCL counted 500 in an hour at 37.2°N 122.8°W on 4 Jun'91.

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. Offshore NE Atlantic records from ARL included two at 53.9°N 20.3°W on 1 Jun'91, three at 61.7°N 20°W on 20 Jun'91, 43 in small groups counted in an hour at 63.5°N 21.4°W off SW Iceland on 21 Jun'91, four at 62.5°N 04.7°W on 23 Sep'91 and nine at 50.4°N 10.1°W on 23 Oct'91.

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BTO/LEICA LISTING IN THE EAST N.ATLANTIC 1991

by Captain P.W. Jackson, MN.

Introduction

At the end of 1990, I decided to participate in the 1991 BTO/LEICA List of UK bird sightings, to lend additional purpose to my watching, with the added bonus of raising money for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). I had never been a 'twitcher', and was initially perplexed by the question of how many bird species I would expect to see within the year, as prospective sponsors reckoned the likely cost. I suggested that 200 species seemed reasonable, but with hindsight, I now know this to have been too optimistic. Additionally, how far off-shore would represent a UK bird-tick caused a little consternation, but in conversation with the head BTO twitcher, Steve Dudley, I was convinced that, for charitable purposes, sightings bound to and from UK would be allowed.

Nowadays, it is usually the case for seafarers on British Merchant ships to go from ship to ship on successive tours of duty, which, in my case, has involved differing trade routes. However, 1991 has seen me consistently on the one ship trading between UK/Ireland to Gibraltar/Portugal which has involved a weekly crossing of Biscay either north or southbound - a unique experience for me. I have made 30 such crossings, in all, involving every month of the year. This has provided me with the opportunity to observe a complete year's bird activity across Biscay and Western Approaches, especially with my BTO/Leica List in mind.

This article is written in response to suggestions from friends and sponsors. The sightings were made as and when time allowed, from a small container ship, which operates a two-man watch system on the bridge of six hours on/off. Whilst I have spent 12 hours of each day at sea on the bridge, much of this time is taken up with navigational and other duties. Port time is limited to the time required for exchange of container loads, with the bridge watchkeeper supervising the deck operation. But the crew are aware of my bird interest, so arrivals on board are quickly reported to me. The ship itself is quite prone to movement in a seaway, which tends to concentrate the mind on such occasions.

Positions of key points mentioned in the text are:Skerries - 53.4°N 4.6°W; Bardsey - 52.8°N 4.8°W; Smalls - 51.7°N 5.7°W; Bishop Rk - 49.9°N 6.5°W; Cape Finisterre - 42.9°N 9.3°W; Leixoes - 41.2N 8.7°W; Cape Roca - 38.8°N 9.5°W; Cape St.Vincent - 37.0°N 9.0°W.

Report - January to April.

My first UK sightings were on 17 Jan, as the ship arrived in the Mersey Estuary: Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Lesser Black-backed (LBB) Gull *Larus fuscus*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* and Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. Throughout 1991, I noted an increase in herons at Seaforth, Merseyside, to a maximum of 19 on 24 Oct. I was home on leave shortly afterwards, for a belated Christmas.

Rejoining on 14 Feb, the ship sailed to Belfast and, rounding the

Calf of Man, six adult Gannets *Sula bassana* followed by a Great Skua *Stercorarious skua* were sighted. Gannets have remained reasonably consistent throughout the year with numbers being sighted off S. Wales, Scillies, Finisterre, Lisbon, and Cape St.Vincent; I presumed this indicates colonies nearby. A maximum of 60 Gannets were sighted together in the southern approaches to St.Georges Channel on 12 Oct, during a depression in that region. Offshore range to SW of UK has averaged 45nm from the Bishop Rock (Scillies), although the occasional single bird has been sighted beyond this, usually an immature.

Similarly, Great Skua have remained quite constant during the year, with ones or twos being seen most months throughout the voyage. A maximum of four were sighted together on 31 Aug, 40 nm NW of C. Finisterre. One particular bird caught the eye on 5 Nov in southern Biscay (44.7°N 09.0°W) with quite fresh plumage, the white wing flashes being particularly brilliant, and the brown back not as dark as 'normal' birds - possibly immature or recently moulted?

The only other skua species sighted during the year was a single Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus* which overtook the ship heading south off the Smalls light-house (S. Wales) on 13 Sep. I later read of a number of Long-tails moving off-shore around this time, but I only saw the one.

On 15 Feb, the ship arrived in Belfast (potatoes to Portugal, would you believe!), and in the outer harbour ten Black Guillemots *Cepphus grylle* were counted amongst large numbers of Guillemot *Uria aalge*. The Blacks were all in summer plumage, so maybe they knew something we didn't. About 50 guillemots had to make way for the ship to berth.

Kittiwakes a-plenty, and indeed these have been the most frequently sighted off-shore seabird, although not the most numerous. Their offshore range, to SW of Bishop Rock has been 45nm on average, although I have one record of an adult with five juveniles 61nm SW of Bishop Rock on 21 Oct.

In Biscay, Kittiwakes and Gannets seem to appear at the boundary of the Gulf Stream arms, usually in company with dolphins. This is most apparent on shelving bottom to SW of UK and around C. Finisterre. The off-shore limit of these birds does seem to coincide remarkably with the Gulf Stream edge; this becomes apparent when monitoring vessel speed over the ground and fluctuations in sea water temperature. On our route, central Biscay is practically devoid of seabirds, until one nears the north- or south-going arms of the Gulf Stream. The first visual indication of a changing current is often the spectacular sight of gannets plummeting headlong into the sea from about 50 feet, seemingly on top of leaping dolphins, with Kittiwakes fluttering around.

On 16 Feb, we were travelling southward across the western approaches to the Bristol Channel when large numbers of Herring Gulls and LBB Gulls alighted on top of the foredeck container stow, all on the windward side facing into the wind. Watching the birds establish a positional pecking order was quite interesting, and remains a very common sight at sea. (See photo).

19 February saw the first landbird of the year aboard, as the ship approached the Gibraltar Straits from the west in a strong easterly wind. A bedraggled Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* remained on board until the

Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* congregating on the foredeck container stow, February 1991

Photo: Captain Peter Jackson MN

ship berthed, before leaving to sample the delights ashore. I had not previously considered the Linnet as migratory.

We returned to Liverpool on 28 Feb, and on a walk around the Seaforth container complex, I came across the small nature reserve wardened by Steve White, a dedicated, friendly and helpful birder. For me, this reserve and the Crosby foreshore/dunes area has been very prolific (and profitable) during the year. On that afternoon, apart from the usual shorebirds, I added to my list a female Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, a female Smew *Mergus albella*, Bar Tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, and being guided by another helpful birder, Paul Morris, bird-keeper at Chester Zoo, located a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* alongside Crosby baths, followed by nine Corn Buntings *Emberiza calandra* feeding on dried marram grass in the dunes.

Throughout the year, I have been continually surprised at the friendliness and extent of knowledge of a number of bird-watchers whom I met, generally in surprising circumstances. A good sprinkling of knowledgeable youngsters amongst them leaves me feeling that the future of ornithology is in good hands.

Returning to Gibraltar on 6 March, I saw a group of eight Swifts *Apus apus* wheeling around the inner harbour where the ship was berthed. Mistakenly I believed they would be moving on northwards, but as the year has passed, swifts have remained in Gibraltar, increasing their numbers. (COMMENT. Could they have been Pallid Swifts *A. pallidus*? MBC). Similarly, during the summer months, at fortnightly intervals, a walk to the Castle of St.George (highly recommended) in Lisbon has seen a large colony of swifts hawking on the city updraught around the castle walls, and one wonders why others migrate much further northward. I didn't note hirundines summering there though.

St. Georges Channel on 12 March: a group of eight pipits arrived on board in fog, causing a dive to the Field Guide to differentiate between Tree and Meadow Pipit. Unfortunately, one of these birds died on board, enabling me to take it to Steve White, who promptly identified it as a Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, pointing out the long hind claw, although plumage and leg colour had convinced me it was a Tree Pipit. He further educated me on the differing plumages across Britain of a number of birds, including the Meadow Pipit, which apparently has a richer buff breast on west coast UK than those in my own home area.

On that same day at Seaforth, I was lucky enough to be present as the first Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* arrived. Clean, sharp and lively birds despite just completing their migration, they looked slightly out of place in the wintry landscape. Over the next few weeks, I counted up to four pairs of Wheatears which are reported to have spent the summer there, but with no reports of breeding. Whilst there that afternoon, I added Goosander *Mergus merganser*, Scaup *Aythya marila* and was introduced to Little Gull *L. minutus*, of which Seaforth has a healthy colony. I thought I'd spotted a Ross's Gull amongst them, only to be told that a number of Little Gulls at Seaforth have pink tinged breasts. A Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* perched on the stones at the boundary of the reserve and the container base, completed the afternoon's enjoyment.

Leaving Gibraltar westbound on 20 March, a White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* spent some time on top of the container-stow before leaving towards Algarve. I have noticed from yearly notes that very few Spring northward migrating birds are evident on board ship, compared to the sightings southbound in the autumn. I suppose the reason is that their northward passage only has a limited sea crossing with every likelihood of meeting land, whilst southbound birds, especially from the west of UK/Ireland are more likely to miss an early landfall, due to adverse weather, or immatures lacking guidance.

St. Georges Channel on 25 March: Razorbills *Alca torda* flying eastwards towards Bardsey Is. close to the ship gave the opportunity to differentiate from Guillemot; this is not always easy on board, as they always seem to be flying away from the observer. On to Liverpool on the 27th saw Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, one only in the Seaforth Reserve, along with Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. The latter increased in numbers as the year passed with a maximum of 65 on 22 Oct, which to me is quite amazing as they are quite difficult to find, let alone count a high number in my home territory.

On 1 April, approaching the Gibraltar Straits from the west, I saw my first hirundine of the year, a House Martin *Delichon urbica*. On 5th entering Leixoes harbour, a large number of terns were sighted around the breakwater: all Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* as far as I could see, and pausing only for a while, because there was no sign on departure the next day. Whilst in Leixoes, I realised that the enormous numbers of Herring Gull were all Yellow-legged *L. a. michahellis*.

10 April, first UK hirundines with Swallow *Hirundo rustica* seen as the vessel passed through the Gladstone lock into the Seaforth berth. Two days later, off Bardsey Is. four warblers on top of the container-

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, 10 April 1991

Photo: Captain Peter Jackson MN

stow. Were they Chiff or Willow? Birds never sing on board ship, but watching the acrobatic display, pink legs and short lively fluttering sorties convinced me they were Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*; followed shortly by my first Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* - three scouring the sea surface with the occasional wing beat.

I was home on leave for most of May, determined to tick as many warbler species as possible, because my next leave would be later in the year, when they would be less conspicuous. This aim was almost achieved with the notable exception of Grasshopper Warbler which remained unheard and unseen despite visiting a number of known sites. This aspect of missing a reasonably probable bird, I suppose, contributes to the 'twitching' experience.

May to June. Returning to sea at the end of May, I had been researching likely birds and missed opportunities. Where were the Puffins? Years ago, they were a common sight in St.Georges Channel, but a couple of tanker strandings had decimated numbers. However, reports from the west coast indicated improving numbers and I was hopeful. Similarly, I had not sighted any Storm-petrels, and needed more diligence to be successful.

8 June southbound, four Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* in the west Bristol Channel. Were they really my first sighting or did I need to be more careful in observing gulls? I had missed a Bonaparte's earlier in the year through improper observation. I should have had Fulmar before now.

14 June off Cape Roca, and suddenly there were shearwaters everywhere. We passed through three separate rafts within a two-hour period, each containing hundreds of birds. White underside, and underwing with darkened edges, a small shearwater but were they Manx or Little? A colleague on board had spent an island holiday studying Manx and he was convinced we were looking at the same species,

indicating black crown below eye level. So Manx Shearwater *Puffinus p.puffinus* they were, but I'm still not 100% sure.

On 19 June, we were passing northward off the Smalls Lighthouse, just leaving the separation scheme, when two birds on the water, close ahead, caught my eye. As we passed, they swam strongly away from the ship's wake, but did not take flight, and binocular inspection revealed the triangular coloured bill of the Puffin *Fratercula artica*. Now for the Storm-petrels.

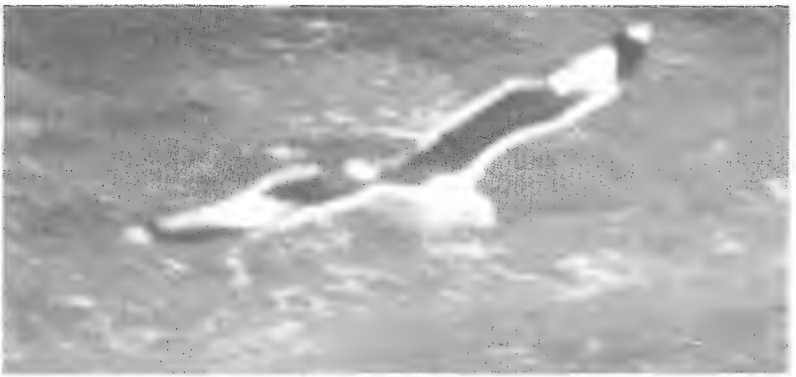
The summer passed quietly with no new additions to my list, monitoring off-shore ranges of seabirds from UK, watching the swifts in Gibraltar and Lisbon, and a family holiday during the latter part of August. At home, wader passage through the Midlands assisted list-building, but owls and raptors were fast becoming a priority ashore.

August to October. I rejoined the ship on 29 August, for what was to become my most successful period, especially for landbirds on board; unfortunately, many were subsequently found dead and one wondered at the losses, when magnified beyond a single ship experience. Such events did, however, permit bird-in-hand identification. 30 August southbound between the Smalls and the Bishop Rock, an autumn plumaged Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* arrived on board - well marked white wing patches, whitish forehead, with buff-white underparts.

The morning of 8 September in mid Biscay saw a number of landbirds on board: four Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* walked around the containers just in front of the bridge giving good views. I knew that a number of friends at home had not sighted Turtle Dove this year, and had wondered at their whereabouts. A sandpiper arrived at this time, which I still believe to have been a Common *Actitus hypoleucos*, remaining at the forward end of the ship, not allowing too close a view. However, in occasional sorties around the ship, a discernible white rump was noticeable, whilst all other features, bill length, breast marking and size pointed to Common. A probable Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenabrenus* also arrived on the bridge, which together confirmed that the SE'ly winds were blowing these birds off course. To the north, on the BBC overseas, news was filtering through of a number of rare birds arriving in the UK, during migration.

Shortly afterwards, my first sighting of Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* at 46.7°N 8.2°W, a raft of about 75 birds on the water. Similar sightings again on 14 Sep at 47.6°N 7.9°W and on 24 Sep at 47.0°N 7.9°W, 139nm from the Bishop Rock (on 14 Sep), before returning southward, were confirmed by a further sighting on 13 Oct at 46.5°N.

12 Sep at Seaforth, a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* and a winter plumage Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* amongst the more familiar gulls and shore-birds meant that observational skills were improving. The Black Tern, in particular, was amongst hundreds of Commons and took some finding. When southbound off the Smalls on 13 Sep, an unusual black-backed gull kept company with six GBB Gulls (two juveniles). This was a mature GBB Gull except for deep white triangular marks on the upper wing from elbow to trailing edge, making it very noticeable. (See photo.) Steve White later told me that there had been a few sightings of a similar bird



Aberrant Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, showing unusual white wing-patches, 13 September 1991

Photo: Captain Peter Jackson MN

in that area. Pos of ship: 51.8°N 5.9°W (WRPB comments on the photo: 'this shows an extreme example of a fairly common aberration among all the big, dark-backed gulls. Less marked examples could result from the exposure of the pale bases of the flight-feathers while the bird is moulting the coverts, but they would hardly show as much white as this. There must be some peculiarity among the genes controlling the pattern of the wingtip, which results in exaggerated markings like this').

Southbound in a similar position on 12 Oct, a bird on the water ahead had me racing with binoculars to the bridge wing because it's stance and posture suggested a diver. The uptilted bill convinced me it was Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, because otherwise the winter plumage at that distance was not distinctive.

13 Oct, in mid-Biscay (46.5°N 8.4°W) whilst a depression just to the north was tracking SE, two Redstarts *Phoenicurus Sp.*, a pair of Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* and a quite rotund unidentified warbler came to rest on board. The female Blackcap died shortly afterwards, with the male standing resolute nearby. He allowed me to pick him up without protest and take him into the accommodation for shelter. In the warmth of the hand, he appeared to doze off quite readily, but became alert again when placed on a settee with water nearby. The plan was to release him with land in sight the next day, but he too succumbed overnight. Watching for more birds that day, both Great and Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* were sighted together, with head markings making the distinction quite apparent.

Approaching the Scillies from the SW on 21 Oct, two separate flights of duck were sighted flying in a wavering diagonal line, quite strongly SW. The ship was 31nm WSW from the Bishop Rock at the time, so where they were travelling to? Most were all black with an occasional bird showing some off-white around the face and throat. One flight of 10 and the other 16; I believe they were Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* but I didn't note any knobs around the bill.

When 30nm SSW of Smalls on 25 Oct, a large black bird flapping around the ship. Initial reaction was a Jackdaw, but this was soon disproved by the overall black plumage and reddish bill and legs. Consult

the Field Guide; a Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, which I had never seen offshore before. Later the same day, when 15nm west of Bishop Rock, I was entering the wheelhouse from the stairwell when a colleague cautioned me to be stealthy of movement; a bird was in the wheelhouse which allowed itself to be taken in hand without apparent distress. It was obviously a bunting, but which one? I compiled a checklist of features; pale stripe through crown, chestnut on coverts, dark grey legs, narrow double off-white wing bars, moderate 'v' tail dark centred with thin white edging. I've ticked a Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*, a lifetime first, but perhaps an expert may have said Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* was much more probable.

On 26 Oct in mid-Biscay, I was called to the bridge for what was described as an unusual bird. Perched on the bridge wing railing was a juvenile Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* with a brightly marked starling breast, brown back with pale chestnut head. Shortly afterwards, a second juvenile and an adult convinced sceptics of the species. The adult was later found dead, but one hoped the youngsters made it, as they were full of vigour on board. Whilst watching these birds, another came into sight amongst the containers; a Robin at first glance, but in flight, noticeable white tail-patches gave the clue, which when later found dead, identified a male Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*.

On 28 Oct, approaching the R.Tagus (Lisbon) estuary on the ebb tide, a number of gulls around, and in one area, a commotional disturbance. Binocular inspection revealed the gulls driving off what appeared a small dark raptor, but on nearing proved to be a Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. The Sooty was quite persistent in its attempts to remain within the ebbing freshet, which seemed to cause absolute distraction to the gulls.

November. 5 Nov, in southern Biscay (44.7°N 9.0°W) Cory's Shearwater riding the airwaves off sea crests in a fresh breeze, reminded me of a Southern Ocean albatross, with their constant gliding turns. 6 Nov, when 49nm north of the Bishop Rock, a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* arrived temporarily on board, before flying off due west into the teeth of an increasing westerly wind. To where?

I went home on leave shortly afterwards, to find a Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* on my local lake. I shall be rejoining and away at the end of year, and so the time seems ripe to commit the year's events to paper, not expecting much more newsworthy events. Perhaps I shall be mistaken.

Conclusion I have seen no Storm-petrels this year, despite watching carefully for them in the Western Approaches. Apart from this, my expectations have been fulfilled at sea, but not so ashore. My BTO/Leica list has not reached the target level of 200 bird species, but despite this, the year has been enjoyable, worthwhile and instructive and I can recommend participation to all, as I understand the event is to be repeated.

Peter W. Jackson, 42, Poplar Road, Bishops Itchington, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. CV33 ORQ

Postscript. Captain Jackson tells me his efforts were rewarded with the magnificent prize of a pair of Leica binoculars. Many congratulations.

M.B.C.

Miscellaneous notes from Papua New Guinea

by Captain D. M. Simpson, MN.

Observations of the Papuan Boobook Owl *Ninox theonacha*

16 Jan 1992 at ARM 459, Fly River. MV *Bosset Chief*. I observed an interesting looking tree-hole high in the limb of a tall Spreading Fig Tree amongst the tall stand of trees on the west bank of the river, about one mile above Kiunga. I had already decided to stay out late this fine day, in the hopes of sighting a nocturnal Hook-billed 'Kookaburra' *Melidora macrorrhina novarrhina*. This place seemed to present a good stake-out position; I could watch the tree-hole, at the same time as watching for the Kookaburra. At dusk, a head suddenly appeared in the hole, almost certainly an owl or possibly an Owlet-nightjar - the light was poor. After a minute or two, the bird suddenly dashed out and disappeared amongst the foliage of the surrounding tall trees. It was small and appeared dark brown. I suspected it to be a Papuan Boobook, and a few minutes later I heard by the river bank the unmistakeable calls of this species - a repeated pair of identical down-slurred notes, with a 0.5 second pause between notes - 'kyo-kyo' or 'boo-boo'. I heard several Hook-billed Kookaburras, but did not see any.

18 Jan, 1900-1930. I staked out the tree-hole again. It was a more cloudy day, and it was quite dark when the owl's head appeared in the hole, but I had a good light this time. The bird was chocolate-brown, and its eyes glowed orange-red in my torch-beam. It darted out very fast in a similar manner to the previous occasion. On reaching the river bank, once again I heard the emphatic and repeated calling. I am satisfied beyond doubt that this is the Papuan Boobook. I have heard the calls before when I was staying at Anbua Lodge, which is more than 1,600m above sea-level in the Southern Highlands. The species certainly has a wide altitudinal range. On these two occasions I have only seen the one bird come out of the hole and I really can't say if this is the nest hole of a pair, or just the roosting hole of the single bird.

The tree-hole is about 80ft above the forest floor, and appeared to have been neatly 'excavated'. Since there are no woodpeckers on this side of the 'Wallace' Line, I cannot help but wonder what manner of creature is responsible for making such holes - certainly not the owls themselves.

Fly River, upper reaches - an interesting creek

25/26 January 1992. MV *Kiunga Chief*. About a mile above Kiunga, on the south side of the river, (ie the opposite bank to the Boobook Owl site) is a creek leading into the bush in an approximately SE direction. Running parallel with this creek is a good trail. From the Fly River bank the forest here does not look up to much, but once one progresses a few yards into the trail, the luxuriant vegetation is a real delight for the botanist, and there are many large *Dipterocarp* type trees. It seems a good bird trail too, and on my first two cursory visits I observed manucodes *Manucodia* sp., Paradise Kingfishers *Tanysiptera galatea*, Spangled Drongos *Dicrurus hottentottus*, Rufous Babblers *Pomatostonus isidorei*, Yellow-billed Longbill *Toxoyhanphus novaeguineae*, Frilled

Monarch *Arses telescophthalmus*, Shining Flycatchers *Myiagra alecto*, etc., as well as a party of the rare and local White-bellied Pitohui *Pitohui incertus*. The only other locality where I have observed this species was at ARM 408, whilst aground there on the same vessel last year.

An interesting snake was observed, at 0700 on 26th, swimming downstream along the surface of the creek. It was very slender, about one metre long, and no more than one inch girth in the thickest part, at mid-length. The tail was pointed and the head small (spade and diamond shaped). The general colour was a light fawn brown, with many darker rings. A conspicuous feature which may help to identify the species, was the pale eggshell, whiteish-blue chin. I should think this is excellent 'snake' country!

My first sighting of a Hook-billed Kingfisher *Melidora nacrorrhina*.

At 1900 (about sunset) on 26 January at the entrance to the same creek referred to above, I saw a Kookaburra fly into a Breadfruit Tree. With my naked eye I noted it had a white, not a rufous breast (thus ruling out the often seen Rufous-bellied Kookaburra *Dacelo gaudichaud*. Immediately I thought this to be my long sought after Hook-billed Kookaburra; although I knew it was there, it was concealed by the leaves. I kept my eyes glued to the spot, in the rapidly diminishing light. Some 15 minutes later, when it was just about dark, it piped up with its unmistakeable four-note call, thus confirming the identification.

This bird has led me a merry dance in the past. I have heard its crepuscular and nocturnal calls many times, in all forested parts of the river. Indeed it is one of the characteristic evening and morning sounds of the Fly River. I have tried to see it by flashlight in the past, but it usually shuts up and moves away, when a light is shone towards it. I have tried to lure it by playing back tape-recordings of its calls, but it just seems to ignore these. Today I got lucky at last, and henceforth I shall name this place 'Hook-billed Creek'.

Also seen this afternoon along 'Hook-billed Creek Trail', in addition to the regular species, I observed a male Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise *Seleucidis melanoleuca*, a male Black Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina nelaena*, and a Yellow-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone chrysoguster*, giving out his loud, cheery and very distinctive song.

Notes on Logging in the Fly River Delta,

MV *Kiunga Chief*. 4 February. Off Umuda Island today, I noted five logging ships at anchor, either loading, or waiting to be loaded. When I first came to the Fly River in 1987, it was quite normal to see one or two such vessels here, but not this many.

This scene reminded me of Borneo in the 1960s and 1970s, before that great island was denuded of most of its magnificent rain-forest. It seems to me that the Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese log buyers are now concentrating their attention on Papua New Guinea, having decimated Borneo and the rest of SE Asia of most of its valuable hardwoods. This is the home of the last extensive rain-forests in this hemisphere. How long can these forests survive? Not long I fear. Apparently the logs being exported from Unuda anchorage are brought down the nearby Bamu River. If each ship takes about a week to load,

then I estimate that, coming out of this one river, must be some **500-600 hardwood trees per day**. This same scene is being acted out at many other log-loading points all around New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, and the Solomons. There is increasing talk in the international press about the need to conserve the world's rain-forests, but it seems to me to be all 'hot air'! Here in New Guinea the Eastern hemisphere's last great tropical rain-forest is being destroyed at an ever increasing speed.

Notes on some trees common to the Fly River and Leyte Island, Philippines.

I first took note of this interesting tree on Leyte Island, where I was on holiday last October. I came across a good stand of these at the forest edge near Lake Danau.

It is however much more common along the Fly River here, in New Guinea. It seems to be very common indeed in the rain-forest, especially along the river banks all the way from Kiunga to the sea, often in clusters with others of its kind, and forming part of the under-storey or mid-storey canopy. I think it is a 'Pandanus Palm', but am unsure, because I lack any books on the subject. There are other palms along the Fly, which I also observed on Leyte, including the 'Fishtail Palm', also other families of trees. I am sure that the very large Spreading Fig-tree *Ficus splendens*, (also known as the 'India Rubber Tree'), so common here, is the same species as found in Leyte. I find it very interesting indeed to note that though many families of mammals and birds did not find their way across the 'Wallace Line', many trees and plants did so.

Notes concerning Frigate-birds in the Fly River delta.

9 February. Between Wabuda Island and Umuda Island, at the entrance of the Fly River, runs a narrow channel deep enough for our loaded copper ships, at all states of the tide. In August last year, I twice had occasions to anchor *Bosset Chief* here. We were awaiting our turn to discharge cargo at the mother ship. This anchorage offers suitable shelter from the strong south-easterly winds and rough seas always experienced in the Gulf of Papua, at this time of the year.

This channel is the haunt of frigate-birds, and nowhere else in the area have I encountered as many. I suspect they roost in the nearby trees, though I do not believe they actually breed here. But this statement needs to be confirmed. There are usually up to 30 birds in the air at any one time, adult males and females, as well as immatures. By far the most numerous species was the Lesser Frigate-bird *Fregata ariel*, but there are always one or two Great Frigate-birds *F. minor*; the former outnumbering the latter by at least 10:1. I saw no evidence of Christmas Island Frigate-birds *F. andrewsi*, and can say it was definitely NOT present.

'Supercroc'

11 February. On an exposed tidal mudbank I observed one of the largest 'Estuarine Crocodiles', I have ever seen. It must have been at least 20ft in length, as it lay on the mud with its huge mouth held wide open. As the ship passed, it swivelled around to face it, thus giving me a direct look into that fearsome mouth - an awe-inspiring sight. Not too

long ago, whilst staying with Dick Randolph (at ARM 100), I took a swim in the murky river - a rather stupid thing to do with brutes like this in the area! Having seen this ugly monster, I swear I shall never risk another swim here.

This particular specimen was missing the end of its tail. One wonders how this came about - was it bitten off by another monster of similar size, or sliced off by the propellor of a passing ship?

A couple of nights earlier, we observed a pair of amber eyes on the river bank, reflected from our spotlights; the Papuan seaman on watch with me assured me these were the eyes of a crocodile. For some reason I had assumed they would appear red in colour. I must do some research into this matter. For example, my recently sighted Boobook Owl; the book says its eyes are yellow, and no doubt they are in daylight, but at night in the beam of my torch they glowed orange or orange-red.

The Scarcity of Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurneyi* on the Fly River.

12 February. A large, dark chocolate-brown/almost black eagle, with a massive blackish bill, was observed on the branch of a tall tree, set amongst pristine forest at the river edge. This is certainly a Gurney's Eagle. I have observed this species on only a handful of occasions, always on the stretch of river between points ARM 80 and ARM 110. When one considers that over the past four years I have spent about 16 months moving up and down this river, I believe one must conclude that this species is very scarce here. Indeed I venture to suggest there is probably only one pair in this area.

In 1987, I observed a pair of these magnificent eagles, soaring and gliding over the forest canopy. They held their wings flat, making them easy to identify from the other large eagles of the area. In the early morning of 2 Oct'90, I observed a pair of these eagles, at ARM 93, in the crown of a tree. Nearby in the same tree was a huge stick nest, obviously an eagle's. Whether or not it belonged to this pair of Gurney's Eagle I cannot say, since I was passing on a fast-moving ship. It may have been an old nest of the White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*, a very common species right along the Fly; its great nests can be found along every few miles of the river bank.

The only other big eagle here is the Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*, but I only see that species in the swampy grasslands, and it is uncommon. The New Guinea Harpy Eagle *Harpyopsis novaeguineae* should occur here, but I've yet to identify it positively; it is not a soaring eagle.

'Finch Corner' - ARM 245

12 February. I passed here today without seeing a single finch! But it is worth recording what a good place it normally is for these birds. This is 'savannah' grassland country, though there does appear to be some good woodland a couple of miles in from the river bank. There are clumps of different species of grasses, amongst the usual long grass. I have often sighted parties of small finches here; the Crimson Finch *Neochmia phaeton* is the regular species, but sometimes amongst flocks of these, if one is lucky, one may see several beautiful Black Mannikins *Lonchura stygia*. This is is a black finch with a golden rump and tail.

It is endemic to the Trans-Fly region of PNG, and I have seen it here several times. I once saw here what I believed to be the rare Grey-crowned Mannikin *Lonchura nevermanni*, in company with other finches, but I never had a good enough view to be 100% sure. Still, I'm sure this is the place to look for it.

A few miles upstream, in the same kind of terrain, is where I saw, in 1988, another notable endemic - a pair of Fly River Grassbirds *Megalurus albolimbatus*. Near here I also observed a Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* swim right across the river. It is a good place for birding, but one must watch out for the big crocodiles which inhabit this area.

King Bird of Paradise country - ARM 408

13 February. We are about to pass ARM 408 on our run upstream. This brings back fond memories of June last year, when I spent 18 days aground at this forested and sparsely populated part of the river. I usually managed a couple of hours birding each morning and afternoon, in the nearby jungle. During this memorable time, I managed to add to my 'life list', several new species, the most memorable of which were:

King Bird of Paradise *Cicinnurus regius*. One of the most unusual looking birds I have ever seen: I had close views of a gorgeous male, in the canopy of a densely foliaged small mid-storey tree. With its rich ruby-red plumage, white belly, blue legs, and two long tail 'wires' with a green feathered disc on the tip of each, it had more the appearance of some sort of exotic child's toy, rather than a real bird. 'Astonishing' is perhaps the best word to describe it. Certainly is must have seemed that way to whoever first discovered it! It is quite a small bird, and I don't know how it acquired the name 'King' but possibly because of its low crest, which could be likened to a crown. Apparently it is not uncommon in lowland forest, but it is more often heard than seen.

White-bellied Pitohui *Pitohui incertus*. This is a rare and local bird, only known in this area. I found it to be not uncommon in the forest here. On 25/26 June '91, I saw single birds, pairs, and on one occasion a party of three, always in the middle or lower storey of the forest.

Rusty Mouse Warbler *Prateroscelesmurina*. I observed one on the forest floor, on 26 June '91. The most remarkable feature of this rather drab little bird is its beautiful singing; it rivals any of our famed songsters back home. In this respect, this is most unusual for a rain-forest bird. It resembles a scrub-wren, with a white throat, and distinctly rusty/rufous breast and belly.

In the forest, on 23 June'91, I found a fine pair of **Papuan Frogmouths** *Podargus papuensis*, roosting during the daytime, perched in a vertical position high in the branches of a large tree. Other notable species observed here were:

Orange-breasted Fig-parrot *Cyclopsitta galielitesti*.Common.
Dwarf Koel *Microdynamis parva*. Only my second sighting.
Magnificent Riflebird *Ptiloris magnificus*
Greater Black Coucal *Centropus nenbeki*
Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon *Ducula rufigaster*
Puff-backed Meliphaga *Meliphaga aruensis*

Black Thicket-fantail *Rhipidura naculipectus*
and of course many many more regular species....

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A Survey of George Island, East Falklands - 22 February-2 March 1992

By Petty Officer (Medical Assistant) P.K. FitzPatrick RN

Petty Officer Ken Maule and I had planned to do a bird survey in the Falklands, preferably on an island. On our departure from the UK we had sought prior permission, and had contacted the Falklands Islands Trust, now part of the Falklands Federation, and asked for information about their breeding bird survey. This is a scheme whereby the Falkland Islands are divided into 255 10km squares; if a square is under-recorded (ie has less than 10 breeding records on it) it is allocated a black spot. There were only 28 such squares remaining, and George Island is divided between two squares, one of which (Peat Bog Point) has been allocated a black spot, so our choice was obvious.

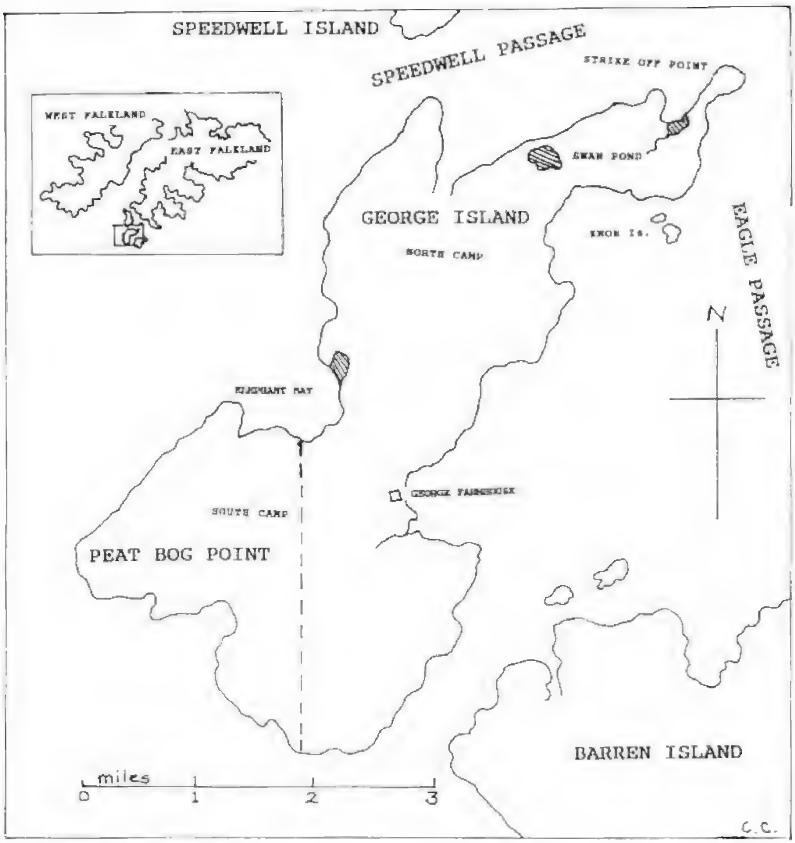
On arrival in the Falklands, I contacted Major Raglan, the Falklands Conservation Officer, who put me in touch with the Falklands Island Company (FIC); they were most helpful, and gave us permission to use the only house on the island. After a frantic week of preparation, we were ready to go - we learnt that George Island was uninhabited, and only occasionally visited by FIC sheep-shearers, so a 'Clansman' radio joined all our other equipment and food, for the helicopter trip out.

George Island is situated 10nm SW of the southernmost tip of East Falkland, between Speedwell and Barren Islands. The farm was a beautiful plastic-clad bungalow, with seven sheds of various sizes, a paddock and stables. There to meet us was a white horse promptly named 'Ned', and two Turkey Vultures (George and Mildred), who treated us with the contempt we undoubtedly deserved. We later found two Black-crowned Night Herons living under our 30ft jetty. We spent some time sorting out water supplies, heating and cooking arrangements etc., but this was time well spent, as it established a fixed and workable routine. Two small sorties to the north and south of the house revealed 20 different species - the Tussac-birds are amazing, about starling size, and so tame they come and sit on one's shoulder. I saw one trying to pluck hair from Ken's head. There are approximately one pair every 20 yards. The next two days were spent covering the southern section of the island, and we then spent a day and a half studying the Peat Bog Point area. The remainder of our time we divided amongst the northern sections, which we felt deserved more attention.

Section one - George Island. The easterly facing house provided the most amazing hide - from the kitchen we could see Black-browed Albatrosses, and the Giant Petrels screaming past our window ignored me even when I went outside. We soon found that we had been joined at the farm by a juvenile Peregrine, possibly from Sea Lion Island, which was mobbed constantly by two pairs of South American Terns, and even 'George' had a go; later in the week we saw only one pair of terns. Travelling south, we saw many Magellanic Penguins, who comically dived into holes when approached - they are well spread all over the island. At sea, White-tufted Grebes could be seen in limited numbers, but only in the south - not seen in lakes and ponds. The SE section was best for small birds, including Rock Wren, Falkland Thrush and Falkland Pipit, Black-throated Finch, and after a week-long search Ken found a pair of Rufous-chested Dotterel. As we explored to the south, we found many more Night Herons, including an adult leaving a hollow stone fence-post, followed by another adult and two young. I was amazed so many could fit into such a tight space, and we were later to find large numbers all around the island. This is also a good area for Sea Lions and Dolphins, which surprised us as the area between George and Barren Islands was choked with kelp.

Moving north across South Camp, there are many Upland Geese and Kelp Geese, and a considerable number of Ruddy-headed Geese, being bullied by the others. The large central lake is worth careful examination, as we found there our only Patagonian Crested Duck. These were accompanied by Flightless Steamer Ducks and Silver Teal, both of which can be seen all over the island, and not merely on the ponds. Surprisingly, we saw only two large groups of Speckled Teal, located in the two ponds. Continuing north past Elephant Bay, there is a small rocky outcrop where we saw our first and only Red-backed Hawk. We nearly walked right past it, and were only six feet away when we saw this big powerful bird - we just looked at it for two minutes before quietly moving on, but it did not seem in the least bothered by our presence. Continuing north, more dolphins at sea, and another column of King/Rock Cormorants, with the inevitable skua predators; they never seemed to tire of buzzing us at such speed that we spent much of the time bent double.

Further north, at the top of the island, we found breeding Southern Giant Petrels, with young fluffy chicks the size of chickens; and what a bill! We here spotted 21 adults and 12 Turkey Vultures eating a recently dead sheep - not a nice sight. Again, they seemed little bothered by us; we noted the vultures were definitely second in line behind the petrels. Moving NE, we soon arrived at Swan Lake, which is the most beautiful lake on the island, and alive with birds, but no swans. We spent two very happy hours here (Ken slept - I counted!). On the return walk along the NE side past Strike Off Point, we spent time counting huge colonies of Kelp Gulls near Knob Island. Returning along the SE coast, the shores soon turned sandy, and we were accompanied home by Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers, with the occasional Snipe. This was the only area where we found no Night Herons (no rocks), but plenty of angry South American Terns to avoid. Overall, we found 39 different species,



in possible breeding situations, with 21 confirmed to have bred in this section.

Section two - Peat Bog Point. Approach from the south is very difficult; the black sand-like substance, which is the bleakest expanse I have ever seen, is undershot with old Magellanic Penguin tunnels, long abandoned, and a fall into these makes a broken leg a high possibility. This, together with unmarked areas of swamp ground makes this a real pain to cross, and the resident Antarctic Skuas are the most aggressive we encountered. We were buzzed all day, sometimes by up to eight at once, and we both had occasional collisions - we got tired of ducking all the time.

When past this area, which contains only Magellanic Penguins and Skuas, one comes to a Rock Beach. This also becomes a clearway for many freshwater ponds, which contain many birds including Chiloe Wigeon. On the biggest of these ponds, the causeway was manned by both Sea Lions and Elephant Seals, which we noted with care, as we knew numbers had been dropping recently. From here on the Rock Beach is alive with birds - many Southern Giant Petrels and hundreds of King

and Rock Cormorants, two pairs of Striated Caracaras, which escorted us out of their territories, but otherwise didn't bother us. A Peregrine zoomed past, but this might have been our farm bird. We saw many Dolphin Gulls here, the only ones on the island. When we stopped for lunch, we watched South American Terns feeding young, and Sea Lion heads popping up to keep an eye on us from the sea. Again, many goslings and teal, all of which seemed to have young; we also saw huge colonies of Kelp Gulls and many of my favourite, the Two-banded Plover.

As our aviators like to say, this is a 'bird-rich environment', and well worth the effort to get here, and it must be wonderful in the spring. We had a superb week on this island, and were amazed at the number of breeding birds we saw: this was due to the disastrous first fledging, when many young were lost due to bad weather. The trip was definitely worthwhile from the survey point of view, particularly with regard to Peat Bog Point. With 13 confirmed breeding species and 19 possible, it will lose its black spot. We both felt we had only scratched the surface, and wished we could have spent longer there.

REFERENCE. Woods R.W. *Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands*. Anthony Nelson 1988.

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COMMENT. The above is extracted from a survey report submitted by Petty Officer FitzPatrick, of HMS *Active*, to **Falklands Conservation**. For reasons of space, latin names of species and details of numbers as shown on the census forms, have been omitted. But the original census records have been gratefully received by Robin Woods, and have been added to the Breding Survey database from which an Atlas of Falklands Islands Breeding Birds will be completed.

M.B.C.

LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E. Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials. The notation BEH indicates 'Bird Examined in the Hand' form:

Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, RV *Franklin*. 4-10 May'91 Bass Strait (1); 20-21 Jul West Equatorial Pacific (1); 1-10 Oct Bismarck Sea (1).

Signalman R.D. Ellis RFA, RFA *Olmeda*, 19 Feb-6 Apr'91 Med/E. Atlantic (7 + 1 BEH).

Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood MN, MT *London Spirit*. 28 May-29 Aug'91, Gulf of California/NE Pacific (4 pages of computer print-out).

Chief Officer A.R. Louch MN, RRS *Charles Darwin* 8-30 Jan'91 NE. Atlantic(1); 28 Apr-23 May'91 NE. Atlantic (2 + 1 BEH); 8-22 Sep and 13-20 Oct, 91 NE Atlantic (2).

Anne Watson, 33' ketch *'Simanda'*, 29 May-12 June'91, UK to Azores and Madeira (1 page)

A.H. Todd, RFA *Olna*. Nov'90-16 Mar'91 - Persian Gulf, Djibouti, Singapore, Persian Gulf (3).

Captain P.C. Dyer MN, MV *Shetland Service* 10-19 Nov, North Sea (2 BEH forms).

Sadly, the number of regular RNBWS reporters sending in records this year (8) is considerably down again this year, and compares with 1990 (8), 1989 (15) and 1988 (18). Record sheets were also received from Andy Webb and other members of the Seabirds at Sea Team (SAST) for the years 1987 (20), 1988 (4) and 1991(4), covering observation in the North and Irish Seas, and the English Channel.

Also included are a wide range of interesting extracts from ship's Meteorological Logs, thanks to Captain M.L.M. (Mike) Coombs of the Met. Office, Bracknell, and Captain Peter Chilman who handles the seabird records from this valuable source; these are indicated by the notation (Met). The analysis is presented in the same geographical sections (A to J) as in past years.

SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W), BAY OF BISCAY and IBERLANT, also IRISH SEA

1987

On 11 Mar, R. Ward (SAST) reported a Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* aboard at 61.4°N, 01.2°W, 45nm N of Muckle Flugga, Shetlands; possibly the same bird was also seen next day when 20nm west of Sullom Voe, and a Curlew *Numenius arquata* flew past heading east.

At 0920 on 1 Apr, whilst on passage Stornoway to Bergen, G. Leaper (SAST) recorded a group of Whooper/Bewick Swans *Cygnus cygnus/bewickii* at 0920 on 1 Apr flying N at 56.4°N 10.2°W, 60nm NW Ireland, also 12 flying NW at 1720 on 2 Apr at 55.2°N 11.2°W; two more on 6th at 59.3°N 7.5°W, 110nm NE Rockall, flying NE.

24-27 Apr, Mark Tasker (SAST) recorded the following flying generally northward in S. Irish Sea, Curlew *Numenius arquata* (12+7+7) on 24th, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (2) on 24th, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* (4) on 24th, also single Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (2), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* on 25th, and Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* 26th and 27th.

On a series of ferry trips across the Irish Sea, 15-22 Sep, Stuart Benn (SAST) recorded: Curlew and Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* (5) on 15th; Meadow Pipits (12 aboard Isle of Man to Dublin on 16th), and Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (3 flying SW) on 16th; Curlew (1), 13 Swallows flying south on 17th; Sanderling *Calidris alba* on 20th, and Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* on 22 Sep.

On 30 Sep, G. Leaper (SAST) (RRS *Challenger*) recorded a heavy passage of Swallows 0840-0950 flying SE, at 52.4°N 05.5°W, St. George's Channel area, and on 4 Oct a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* aboard briefly at 58.9°N 07.6°W, 45nm NW Hebrides.

On 5 Oct, a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* circled ship at 58.0°N 10.9°W, 85nm west of St. Kilda; on 7 Oct, in position 65.8°N 09.9°W, 75nm west of Barra Hd., three groups of waders (13 + 20 + 30), probably Dunlin *Calidris alpina* were seen flying N; also a Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and a Golden Plover flying NE.

On 9 Oct, (1210-1600) Leaper also recorded several groups (21, 50, 70, 35 and 65) of Grey Geese, probably White-fronted *Anser albifrons* flying S/SE.

Further southerly movements of birds were noted in the Irish Sea during the period 4-10 Oct by A. Webb (SAST) including: Meadow Pipits (1, 2, 1 and 1), Grey Wagtail (1) Dunlin (11 on 6th, 4 on 7th) and Teal *Anas crecca* (4 on 9th).

1988

On 18 Feb, S. Benn (SAST) recorded a Rock Pipit aboard at 58.6°N 00.5°W, 35nm E. Orkneys; it remained aboard and left near Fair Isle pm 20th. A Skylark *Alauda arvensis* was also aboard 21st.

On 11 Jun, A. Webb *et al* (SAST) reported a Dunlin aboard at 60.9°N 08.6°W, 65nm SW Faeroes, and a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* circling at 60.2°N 08.5°W on 13th. A Swallow (Adult m) arrived exhausted at 1235 on 17 Jun at 58.0°N 09.6°W, 40nm NW St. Kilda.

1991

On 4, Jan MV *Act 7* (Met), southbound en route for Fremantle via The Cape, reported a probable Lanner Falcon *Falco bearmicus* first seen circling in position 19.4°N 17.6°W, 72nm due west of Cape Timiris, Mauritania, and eventually landed aboard; the wind was NE by N, blowing fine particles of sand off the Sahara. The bird remained three days until after sunset on 7th, when 300nm SSW Liberia, during which time it was seen to catch and eat at least four petrels and a flying fish.

On 8 Jan, ARL recorded two House Martins *Delichon urbica* circling the ship, and a group of five Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* flying east, when 35nm south of Cape St. Anne, Sierra Leone (6.8°N 12.9°W). Winds were NE/4. On 30 Jan a Swallow circled the ship for 20 mins in position 4.1°N 2.8°W, 50nm SW Ghana coast. It was seen to arrive from south and depart NE.

On 6 Apr, RDE saw a Hoopoe aboard *Upupa epops* at 36.3°N 08.5°W, 40nm SE C. St. Vincent.

On 28 Apr, ARL recorded Curlew (3), at 45.6°N 12.5°W, 110nm NxW C. Finisterre - they flew past heading east; wind was WNW/3 poor vis. On 2 May a Turnstone was seen briefly, circling ship, at 48.0°N 17.3°W, 450nm NW C. Finisterre; it departed S, winds NE'ly/3-4.

On 6 May, three probable Whimbrel arrived from S and dep. E at 40.6°N 20.0°W, 300nm SE Azores; winds had been NE'ly/6 for past five days.

On 10 May, a medium-sized wader, possibly a Knot *Calidris canutus* was sighted flying N, high above waves at 47.2°N 24.0°W, 570nm N of Azores.

At least one House Martin was sighted am 23 May at 50.6°N 32.9°W, 750nm SSE C. Farewell, Greenland. An adult (m) Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was sighted roosting on foremast cross-tree at 2145, just before sunset, and viewed from a distance of 15m; winds were S'ly/3-4. A number of House Martins were around, and although no one saw a kill, there seemed to be fewer next morning.

Other hirundines were sighted during this period, including a Swallow and House Martin on 28th at 48.0°N 28.5°W, 510nm N Azores. House Martins (8), roosting on life-boat davit wire, also a Swift *Apus apus* on 29th. A Dunlin arrived aboard on 7 Jun, 180nm west of Slyne Hd., Ireland, after 24 period of E'ly gales; it subsequently died.

On 24 May, MV *Canmer Triumph* (Met) recorded numerous birds aboard in an exhausted state at 47.7°N 17.9°W, 350nm SW C. Clear, Ireland. They included c20 Racing Pigeons, Golden Plover (2), Swallow (1), and several Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*; the weather was fine and visibility good, with no recent strong winds. They remained aboard all day, but disappeared before dusk, except for the Swallow which remained until 27th.

On 30 May, AW recorded a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* aboard her yacht briefly at 48.5°N 7.9°W. Noon position on 31st was 47.3°N 10.6°W, when a probable Swallow.

attempted to land at 1020, and a possible Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* also tried to land, but flew off at 1200. A House Martin was around 30 mins, landing several times at 2000. Winds were NE/4, and visibility moderate/poor.

During the period 2-8 Jul, A. Webb (SAST) was in the SW Approaches and recorded a significant number of Swifts, heading generally NE: 4 Jul (3 +1+1+2), 4 Jul (2), 6 Jul (two singles) 45nm SW Scillies, and singles on 7th and 8th.

On 28 Aug, MV *Kukawa* (Met) reported a probable Turnstone and 'flava' Wagtail aboard at 40.5°N 11.2°W, 120nm west of Portugal.

On 8 Sep ARL recorded three Redshank *Tringa totanus* flying N, in postion 61.6°5.1°W, 45nm west of Faeroes, and a Wheatear aboard at dawn on 9th when 80nm north of Faeroes. Three Grey Herons appeared from north, and circled ship for 40 mins am on 12 Sep, in postion 63.9°N 5.5°W, 105nm NNE Faeroes.

On 9 Sep, MV *Esplanade* (Met) reported a 'heron' (presumably a Grey Heron) circling ship in posn. 57.9°N 17.0°W, 100nm west of Rockall.

Off C. Finisterre on 13 Sep, MV *Providence Bay* (Met) recorded a Grey Wagtail., and a White Wagtail *M. alba* off C. St. Vincent on 14th.

At 1640 0n 7 Oct, FPV *Vigilant* (Met) reported six 'swans' *cygnus sp.*, flying south towards Cape Wrath, Sutherland, at a height of 25 ft approx.

On 20 Oct, a Short-eared Owl arrived aboard FPV *Vigilant* (Met), at 56.9°N 09.3°W, 52nm WNW Barra Head. It was exhausted and bedraggled, due to very heavy rain. It stayed 4-5 hours, but left when offered some meat; the cook took offence, and threatened to leave also!

On 25 Nov, MV *Mairangi Bay* (Met) reported a probable Short-eared Owl aboard briefly at 6.5°N 14.3°W, 120nm W. Sierra Leone.

SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, and NORTH SEA

1987

On passage Aberdeen to Stavanger 24 Apr-1 May, S. Benn (SAST) reported a Wheatear *Oenathe oenanthe* (Ad f) on 25 Apr at 60.5°N 00.6°W, 10nm east of Fetlar (Shetlands), and an adult (m) at 60.0°N 00.6°W on 26th; a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* at 61.0°N 00.6°E, 10nm NE Shetlands on 28th; a Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and a Merlin *Falco columbarius* at 59.8°N 02.4°E, 80nm west of Norway.

On 16 May, H. Prendergast (SAST) recorded a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (juv f) aboard briefly at 59.8°N 01.5°E, 10nm NE Fair I. Another juv (f) Sparrowhawk circled the ship briefly at 1120 on 18th in position 58.2°N 01.8°E.

G. Leaper (SAST) recorded a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* at 57.6°N 05.3°E, 50nm SW Norway on 7 Jul, and a Redshank *Tringa totanus* at 58.7°N 02.44°E flying E on 8 Jul.

R.M. Ward (SAST) aboard HMS *Alderney* recorded the following species on 12 Aug: Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (12) 30nm east of Yarmouth; in the Dogger Bank area, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (4 + 6) flying SW, Curlew/Whimbrel *Numenius sp* (1), Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (1 circling ship) and a Wheatear briefly aboard. The visibility was good.

S. Benn (SAST) recorded the following early autumn migrants 14-28 Aug: Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (5) on 14 Aug off Aberdeen; Wheatear (1) central N. Sea on 16th, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (5) on 17th, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* one on 20th, Oystercatcher (8) on 20th, and a Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricarius* on 22nd. On 25 Aug, singles of the following species were recorded briefly aboard when 40nm east of Sunburgh Hd., 59.7°N 00.1°E: White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (1 juv + 1 adult), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (Ad m), Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (1 adult), Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea*. The wind was E/3, with mod vis.

During the period 21-31 Aug, A. Webb (SAST), recorded the following species in the general area 30nm SW Norway on 21-26th to central N. Sea on 27th: Common Sandpiper, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, Oystercatcher (27 flying SW), and Turnstone (4 flying S) on 21 Aug; Garden Warbler, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (2), Teal *Anas crecca* (m) on 22 Aug; Curlew (4) flying south very high on 23rd when 30nm west of Stavanger; Redshank (2 + 2) and Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticola* (2), flying S. on 24th; a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilis* was aboard all day on 26th when 50nm west of Stavanger, also Garden Warbler (found dead next day), a Ruff *Philomelos pugnax* (m), White Wagtail (2), a Ringed Plover, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, and a Swift

Apus apus circled briefly at 1830. Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Willow Warbler and White Wagtail (Ad m) were aboard briefly in the central N. Sea on 27 Aug, and further single Meadow Pipits on 28th and 31st. 29 Oystercatchers were seen flying SW on 29 Aug at 58.6°N 05.3°E.

On 20 Sep, A. Webb (SAST) recorded a westerly movement of Meadow Pipits at 56.8°N 03.5°E, in the Ekofisk area, 130nm SW Stavanger - groups of 4, 12 and 30 between 0520-0840; a Redstart (Adult m) was found dead, having probably arrived overnight. Winds were NE/E force 4. A group of 11 Oystercatchers flew past SW at 1650. Further migrants were seen on 21st at 57.2°N 04.6°E, 80nm SW Norway, including Wheatear (1), Redstart (1), Ruff (1 m) and a White Wagtail. An adult (m) Redstart was aboard briefly on 22 Oct at 57.6°N 06.6°W, 30nm south of Kristiansand. A Kestrel *Falco tinnunculs* (Adult m) was aboard briefly on 23 Oct, also at least one Garden Warbler at 58.3°N 04.0°E, 60nm SW Stavanger. A Purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima* circled briefly at 60.6°N 02.4°E on 28 Sep, and a first year Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* was aboard for two hours on 29 Sep at 60.1°N 03.3°E, 50nm west of Bergen - good views were made, and a full description was taken.

1989

On 25 Aug, MV *Elk* (Met), in the central N. Sea at 55.6°N 02.3°E, reported the following aboard during a spell of low cloud, drizzle and low visibility: Curlew (1), Oystercatcher (15), Ringed Plover (1), White Wagtail (1), Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (4), Redshank (1) and Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* (1 juv). A Kestrel was aboard all day on 27 Aug, on passage Teesport to Helsingborg.

1991

On 2 Feb, MV *Telnes* (Met) reported five Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*, off Zeebrugge at 51.3°N 03.2°E. A group of 60-100 Great Crested Grebes were sighted close inshore on 22 Feb, also c100 Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, and a large number of Coots *Fulica atra*.

On a series of cross-channel ferry trips, A. Webb (SAST) had sightings of a variety of species including: 22 Black-tailed Godwit heading NE on 10 Apr at 50.1°N 0.9°E; Wigeon *Anas penelope* at 50.8°N 01.5°E on 11 Apr; Swifts *Apus apus* were seen on 22 May (1), 25 May (2 + 1), and a Swalllow flying east on 27 May. A Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* circled at 49.9°N 04.1°W on 30 May.

A probable Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (juv), was aboard MV *Telnes* (Met) off Ijmuiden at 52.3°N 04.0°E. A Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* was aboard at 1100 on 30 Sep, and a Kestrel at 1100 on 30 Sep.

On 10 Oct, Oil Production Vessel *Seillean* (Met) reported a spectacular congregation of birds in position 58.1°N 01.5°E, during adverse weather of fog and wind NE/E 10-14kts. A large flock of assorted birds estimated at 800-1,000 were seen during the early hours 0001-0600z, flying around in a clockwise direction, with only the odd one landing on board. Numbers decreased rapidly as it got light, until about 200-250 remained, and numbers continued to decrease throughout the day. Identifications included Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (1), Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (1), Blackbird *Turdus merula* (1 m), Starling (7), Redwing *Turdus iliacus* (14), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (4 - m and f), Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (12 - m and f, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (9 - m and f), Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* (2), Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* (3), Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (1), Dunlin (2), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (1), Pied Wagtail (2), 11 prob. Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*.

On 10 Oct, PCD reported a probable Meadow Pipit (juv) aboard at 57.5°N 00.5°E, 80nm from Peterhead.. Visibility was less than 0.5nm, and it had difficulty in flying. It remained 16 hrs, and was caught and examined (BEH form), before flying off strongly S on 11th. On 19 Nov PCD examined a Greenfinch (f) in the same position, which was distressed and later died.

On 22 Oct, Mr C.D. Mercer photographed a Long-eared Owl aboard MV *Providence Bay* (Met), whilst at anchor in the Maas West anchorage, off Rotterdam; it was seen to fly off later pm. A probable Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* was reported by another crew member. He also noted a Goldcrest on 24 Oct, on passage between Rotterdam and Hamburg.

On 25 Oct, RV *Cirolana* (Met) recorded a Chaffinch (f) at 58.4°N 00.6°E, and a Redstart (f) at 59.2°N 00.9°E on 26th.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* off Rotterdam, 22 October 1991
Photo: Mr C. D. Mercer MN

SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°)W

1991

At 0800 on 24 Mar, MCL recorded a Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscala*, a Robin *Turdus migratorius* and a Brown-headed Cowbird *Malothrus ater* at 36.9°N 74.5°W, 75nm SE C. Charles; the ship had passed 24nm off C. Hatteras during the night, and these birds were mobbed by c15 Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*. Also sighted briefly flying around the ship were probable Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (2) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*. Two Flickers *Colaptes auratus* were sighted at 1030, when 55nm off Chincoteague, 37.6°N 74.3°W; they stayed aboard until arrival New York later that evening.

On 15 Oct, LPG Carrier *Maersk Captain* (Met), bound from Houston to Antwerp, had two Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* aboard in position 27.6 °N 71.9°W, 300nm NE Bahamas.

18-21 Oct, MV *BP Adventure* (Met) recorded at least two Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* (m and f) aboard; The first joined on 18th when 260nm E. Burmuda, 32.1°N 60.9°W, but disappeared on 19th. Another joined later on 19th, and then two were seen together on 20th. Both seen to depart on 21st for Eleuthera I. when in NE Providence Channel at 25.6°N 76.9°W.

SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1991

At 1600 on 22 Feb, MCL recorded an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* aboard at 29.6°N 088.2°W, 30nm S. Pensacoula; it remained overnight and departed NW; also aboard was a Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*. At 0700/23rd a Purple Martin *Progne subis* was sighted which remained until the ship berthed at 1600. A Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* flew past heading NE at 0730. When about 5nm off Pensagoula on 23rd, about ten Common Loons *Gavia immer* were seen swimming and diving around the vessel, together with eight Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*.

On 25 Feb, two Red-winged Blackbirds *Agelaius phoenicues*, and a Robin were sighted 12nm off Pensagoula.

On 27 Feb, a Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* flew round the vessel at 25.8°N 090.2°W, 195nm SSW Mississippi; it departed NNW.

Whilst at anchor 3nm off Pajaritos at 18.2°N 094.4°W, 2-4 Mar, MCL recorded a kingbird sp. *Tyrannus sp.* which settled briefly on 2 Mar, before heading W. On 4 Mar, a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* flew past SW at 0850, and a Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* flew around the ship 10 mins, making several attempts to land. At 1020 a group of about 70 White Ibis *Eudocimus albus* flew past in a long line, heading SW at 64m; white overall, red face, black wing-tips and large decurved bills seen.

An Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* circled 10 mins on 13 Mar, when 25nm S Jamaica, 18.2°N 78.7°W, departing NE.

On 14 Mar, a Cattle Egret and a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* were recorded 25nm SW Cuba at 21.0°N 84.8°W, and a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* arrived from N at 22.0°N 85.0°W, 25nm NW C. San Antonio.

During force 6 NW winds on 15th, three Great Blue Herons tried to land aboard on 15th at 22.7°N 86.4°W, 205nm WSW Dry Tortugus, but wind too gusty; an American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* also attempted to land aboard, and a Cattle Egret landed briefly. A Green Heron *Butorides striatus* circled ship at anchor once during heavy rain shower, on 16th.

Whilst at anchor 30nm SW Chandlier I., 29.7°N 88.4°W, 16-19 Mar, MCL recorded: Cattle Egret 1200/17th, Great Blue Heron (2) stayed overnight 17/18th; Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* aboard several hours, also five other small passerines seen in floodlights; two Green Herons seen at dawn on 18th; two Barn Swallows circling at dawn; Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris* (m), found on board, and fed with sugar and water from a dropper. It was allowed to fly around cabin, and was taken ashore for release, but was too small and delicate to measure for a BEH form. A Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea* (m) was found aboard 1830/18th, covered with soot and salt water. It was given freshwater rinse, dried and kept in a box overnight, and appeared fully recovered when released next morning, but later found dead. Three Green Herons arrived from S 0930/19th, and departed NW, and a single Cattle Egret arrived from N at 1100, departing SE. Another Cattle Egret also in breeding plumage (rusty coloured breast and head), appeared briefly 0730/19th.

On 15 Apr, MV *Lincolnshire* (Met) recorded an American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* aboard at 26.9°N 82.9°W, 70nm west of Florida.

On 16 Oct, LPG/C *Haukong* (Met) recorded a large 'hawk/eagle' which landed aboard at 28.9°N 94.7°W, carrying a dead probable Green Heron, which it ate, leaving only head and legs.

On 25 Oct, while passing into the Caribbean through the Mona passage, MV Snow Drift (Met) had three possible Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* roosting in the masts, feeding on a variety of small birds; the decks next morning were 'littered with feathers, heads, wings and less choicey bits'. Ten minutes after sunrise on 26th, the falcons left one by one, and two hours later three 'egrets' landed on board, and remained for several hours. Just before sunset, a falcon arrived carrying a small bird, and proceeded to litter the recently swept decks; a second falcon arrived 15 minutes later, and at least one remained until arrival at Almirante, Panama, on 27th.

SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA

1991

During the period 19-25 Feb, when operating off Cyprus, RDE saw an unidentified wheatear *Oenanthe* sp. at 1400 on 19 Feb, when 75nm south of Cyprus. Two Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* were aboard on 20th, bathing in fresh water; one was exhausted and later died (BEH). An Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina* was aboard briefly on 24th, and two Chiffchaff *P. collybita* when close off Cyprus on 25th; winds were S/3.

MV *City of Plymouth* (Met) recorded a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* on 3 Mar, when 75nm WSW Crete.

On 10 Mar, RDE saw a Hoopoe, at 35.6°N 24.1°E, north of Crete. In the Ionian Sea on 21 Mar, at 1300, he saw a flock of 20 Curlew *Numenius arquata* flying N at 10ft, at 35.7°N 21.9°E; winds were NW/3. Eight Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* were about the ship briefly at 36.1°N 20.7°E, SW of Greece, pm on 21 Mar; also a Chiffchaff until dusk. Two male Black Redstart *Phoenicruros ochruros*, in spring plumage, were aboard briefly at 1440 on 22 Mar, in the S. Ionian at 36.2°N 16.7°E, before departing N.

On 16 Mar, a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (m) was aboard MV *Pacheco* (Met) in the central Ionian Sea at 37.2°N 18.7°E, after a period of recent easterly gales; also a probable

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, a possible wheatear *Oenanthe sp.*, and two Swallows *Hirundo rustica*.

In the Straits of Messina on 23 Mar, RDE recorded (7-9) Robins *Erithacus rubecula*, and a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* aboard; the latter was attacked by the Robins as they vied for sheltered positions from strong winds (SE/5). A Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (m) was aboard all day on 24 Mar when 50nm north of Sicily.

A Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was sighted aboard MV *Pacheco* (Met), 25nm SW Sardinia on 27 Mar.

On 3 Apr, RDE recorded 18 Swallows *Hirundo rustica* flying N in small groups when 62nm NW Majorca; also aboard were a Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Chiffchaff (2), Robin (1), Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* (1), Whitethroat *S. communis* (1 m). A group of two Swallows and two House Martins *Delichon urbica* were aboard 1900-2030, and a possible Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*. A Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, and a Woodlark *Lullula arborea* came aboard overnight, and were observed closely am on 4 Apr at 38°N 01.2°E, 50nm S. Ibiza; winds were W/3. A Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was sighted roosting in the rigging at 1030. At 1215 a Swallow and a Redstart *P. phoenicruros* (f) were aboard, 65nm south of Ibiza.

On 14 Apr, four probable Blue-headed Wagtails *Motacilla f. flava* were aboard MV *Pacheco* at 38°N 07.5°E, 60nm off N. coast Algeria.

On 6 May, MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) reported a number of birds taking refuge aboard after a violent squall from NW, in position 37.0°N 03.9°E, off C. Bengut. Species identified included possible Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Savi's Warbler *L. luscinoides*, Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* and Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*. Approaching coast of Cyprus from west on 10 May, a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (ff) was aboard briefly, and also a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*.

On 27 Jul, MV *Tokyo Bay* (Met) reported a Hoopoe at 37.2°N 03.9°E, 17nm off C. Bengut, Algeria.

On 21 Sep, MV *Maersk Cadet* (Met) reported a flock of 'about 20 kingfishers' (no description given) when alongside Ras Lanaf (Libya), feeding on 'small minnows'.

On 21 Sep, MV *Providence Bay* (Met) reported a Hoopoe, unidentifed doves *Streptopelia* sp., warblers and a Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (f), off Port Said.

On 14 Dec MV *City of Ipswich* (Met) reported five Pochard *Aythia ferina* (1m, 5f) at 34.6°N 31.9°E - 29nm WSW Cyprus. They circled the ship for 20 mins, before heading off towards Cyprus.

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, central Red Sea, 3 May 1989

Photo: Ldg. Airman (METOC) Chris Patrick RN

Winner of the *Sea Swallow* Photographic Competition 1991

SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1991

A Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was photographed aboard MV *Cardigan Bay* (Met) at 21.0°N 38.6°E on 23 Mar. It was seen aboard for several days. On 3 Sep MV *Encounter Bay* (Met) reported an extremely large migration of White Storks *Ciconia alba*, in the Gulf of Suez at 28.2°N 33.4°E. The 'sky was temporarily darkened', as they stretched from 'horizon to horizon', as they flew 200' above the ship, heading west from Sinai peninsular into Egypt. The wind was NW/8.

On 27 Apr, a Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* was reported aboard MV *Staffordshire* (Met) at 14.0°N 42.9°E.

SS *Bristol Renown* (Met) reported an unidentified falcon aboard in the S. Red Sea on 6 Jun, eating a smaller bird.

On 7 Sep, MV *Staffordshire* (Met) photographed a Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* aboard in S. Red Sea, 14.6°N 12.3°E.

SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1989

On 4 Nov, MV *Tribulus* (Met) recorded a possible Green heron *Butorides striatus* aboard at 03.9°S 85.7°E, 630nm SSE Sri Lanka.

1991

On 16 Oct, MV *Wiltshire* (Met) recorded a probable Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, which arrived aboard at 0940z in position 20.1°N 64.9°E, 250nm from nearest coast, Ras al Hadd. By dusk (1400z) it was seen astern flying strongly, and not seen again.

On 18 Oct, MV *Staffordshire* (Met) reported a possible Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* at 21.6°N 61.9°E, 120nm east of Ras al Hadd.

In the Bay of Bengal at 05°N 83.7°E on 18 Nov, MV *Staffordshire* (Met) reported a probable Intermediate Heron *Bubulcus intermedia* which landed aboard, very tired.

SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1991

On 9 Mar, AHT recorded the following at 25.5°N 54.9°E, 100nm east of Qatar: White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* aboard, Swift *Apus apus*, House Martin *Delichon urbica* circling, and a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* aboard on 10th. Another Hoopoe was aboard briefly on 13th, when 25nm east of Abu Ali, 27.6°N 49.9°E. On 14th, when 40nm NE Al Jubail, 27.5°N 50.4°E, two more Hoopoes were seen flying around, and aboard were a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (3), White Wagtail (1), and a Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (m - possibly race *variegata*). On 16th, when 70nm east of Qatar, Hoopoes (2+1), and a Stonechat (f) were aboard. A Chiffchaff was aboard when at anchor in 25.1°N 54.9°E, and a Curlew *Numenius arquata* flew past; an unidentified pipit, possibly a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* was observed on deck.

On 4 Oct, MV *Providence Bay* (Met) reported a nightjar *caprimulgus* sp. in the Gulf of Oman. It was sighted following in the ship's wake, but settled aboard briefly, several times.

SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1991

On 1 Mar, MV *Staffordshire* (Met) reported two probable Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* at 9.2°N 110.2°E in the S. China Sea.

In the Bass Strait, NGS recorded a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* on 4 May, 13nm east of Wilson's Promontory, 39.0°S, 146.0°E; it flew alongside for 20 mins, then dep. WSW towards land. He saw another Little Egret on 10 May at 38.3°S 147.5°E, 6.5nm

south of Crippsland coast. It flew directly N towards land. NGS comments that this species is an uncommon winter visitor to Tasmania.

On 13 May, MV *Table Bay* (Met) reported a flock of 8-10 probable Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* (typical 'hunched up' posture noted) aboard in the S. China Sea at 28.6°N 126.9°E, 140nm NW Okinawa; also a probable Green Heron *Butorides striatus*.

On 20 Jul, NGS recorded Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* aboard at 01.5°S 147.3°E, 30nm N Manus I. It remained aboard for 11 hrs; iridescent bronze-green plumage and white tail, and 'diagnostic shoulder hackles' noted. This species is widely distributed on islands from E. Indian Ocean to Solomon Is. It departed at 0700/21st, when 115nm N Manus I, at 0.1°S 147.1°E. On 21 Jul, he also identified a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, aboard briefly, 119nm north of Manus; a common visitor to PNG, arriving in mid-July.

On 17 Aug, a spectacular photograph was taken of 29 Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla* roosting on the aerial on MV *Encounter Bay* (Met), at anchor off Fremantle, W. Australia.

On 7 Sep, a probable Japanese Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone atrocaudata* (f) was found dead aboard MV *Tokyo Bay* (Met), on arrival Kobe, Japan.

On 21 Sep, MV *British Success* (Met) reported a probable Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* 19.3°N 134.5°E, 600nm SE Okinawa.

On 1 Oct, NGS recorded a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* aboard at 03.7°S 151.7°E, 27nm north of New Britain. It was found injured, and died two days later - a common migrant to PNG/Australia, medium size, with distinctive rufous/brown crown. On 10 Oct, a Superb Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus superbus* (m) roosted aboard overnight at 09.7°S 151.7°E, 28nm SW Egum Atoll; 'a beautiful small dove with reddish purple crown, orange nape and shoulders, green wings, back and tail. Grey breast suffused with orange, dark purple lower breast-band etc - unmistakable.' NGS had a previous record from this area in 1988.

In the western Pacific, MS *Ariake* (Met) recorded a bird of prey which came aboard at 2100z on 5 Nov, in position 5.4°N 142.5°E, 120nm SW Caroline Is. It remained on the mainmast for the next five days, hunting and catching small seabirds, which it devoured leaving only feathers and bones. It could not be positively identified, but was thought by the Chief Officer to be a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, but the excellent drawing showed brown colour and absence of 'moustache'. It was thought to have been blown off course by Typhoon 'Seth' which was in the vicinity on first arrival, and it had great difficulty in staying with the vessel in the strong winds, but it remained until the ship approached the islands of the Okinawa Group, when it disappeared. The last position was 29.3°N 130.8°E. It had hitch-hiked a distance of 1,620nm Co. 332°.

On the morning of 11 Nov, MV *Pacific Teal* (Met) on passage Bilbao to Hitachi reported a group of Snowy Egrets *Egretta thula* at 12.6°N 108.2°W, 380nm SW Mexico. Two were first seen standing on the ship's crane, and these were joined throughout the day until the total reached 14. By daybreak on 14th, numbers were down to two. Also seen on 14th were two unidentified 'hawks' but these showed no interest in the egrets, or the two Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster* also aboard.

On 12 Nov in the South China Sea, MV *Staffordshire* (Met) reported a probable Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* at 15.2°N 115.1°E. It was 'riding the thermals in front of the bridge quite happily, until the bosun turned the hose on it!'

SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1991

On 11 Jan, RRS *John Biscoe* (Met) reported a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* aboard 2000-2135 at 51.2°S 57.6°W, close off C. Pembroke, Falkland Is. It landed clutching a Thin-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*.

M.B.C.

LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1990

Summarised by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy. Landbird records from or near Station LIMA (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) were received from H.J. Freckleton and Met Staff of OWS *Cumulus*, covering five trips (voyage Nos. 55, 56 and 59-61). Records cover the following periods: 24 May-8 Jun, 6 Sep-3 Oct, 10-27 Oct and 15-16 Nov.

Greylag Geese *Anser anser*. 2 May, six resting on water 200yds from ship 1hr. before dep. NW.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. One flew past NE on 16 Nov.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*. One (f) on foremast 0700-1800/28 Apr. Seen to catch two probable wheatears. A second Merlin arrived 1200, resting briefly before departing NW.

A Sanderling *Calidris alba*. One made 3-4 circuits of ship on 12 Sep.

Spotted Redshank.*Tringa erythropus*. One possible (but no description given), arrived from N on 19 Sep; harried by Fulmars. Wind S.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*. One circled ship twice on 31 May, dep. N.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*. One aboard two hours on 28 Apr.

Collared Dove *Strepotpelia decaocto*. One arrived 29 May. Fed and released at end of voyage.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. One resting aboard on 2 May.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*. One probable made several approaches, but did not attempt to land, on 31 May in posn. 56°N 15.7°W. Arr. from N, departed E. Wind 200/5kts.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. One close to ship on 12 May, mobbed by about 30 Kittiwakes and driven off to NE. One arrived 1245 24 Oct, disappeared overnight. 20 Oct one arrived 1130, found dead am 21st.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*. 27 May (1) aboard briefly; 30 May (15) exhausted, some died; 31 May(12) exhausted, some died; 1 Jun (14), some died; 3 Jun (1) aboard; 8 Jun (1) exhausted, died.

Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*. (No description given). 6 Sep (4) resting aboard; 9 Sep (2) sheltering; 10 Oct (1).

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. One (m) exhausted 25 May. Died. Wind 200/10. 28 May (2) died.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*. One (f) disturbed aboard 3 Oct.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. 28 Apr (2) caught by Merlin; 6 Sep (2) resting aboard am; 11 Sep (1) several circuits of ship but not seen to land; 16 Sep (1) aboard am; 23 Oct (1) landed 0730 exhausted.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. Singles on 20 Oct (found dead 21st) and 26 Oct.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*. One aboard 6 hrs on 18 Oct, and one juv. 19 Oct.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. One on 11 Oct.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. Two landed on the cross-trees 23 Oct; two on mast 27 Oct, dep. east.

COMMENT. The number of species (19) compares with previous years: 1986 (14), 1987 (17), 1988 (38), 1989 (14), and 1990 (13). But the composition is unusual, with no records this year of Swallow, ducks, or warblers. The Pied Flycatcher and Carrion Crow records are unusual.

M.B.C.

SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1991

Summarised by Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

All observations are from OWS *Cumulus*, and the format of the summary remains unchanged. The total number of observation days this year was 304 - 12 days more than in 1990.

Totals of daily counts (including immatures shown in brackets): Fulmars 16473 (338 blue phase); Gannets 170(61); Herring Gulls 83 (0); Lesser Black-backed Gulls 595 (315); Great Black-backed Gulls 461 (152); Glaucus Gulls 33 (20); Iceland Gulls 1 (0); and over 23,596 Kittiwakes (not separated).

With the exception of Iceland Gull, all these species show a marked increase, as do most of the less frequent species. Some of this could possibly be ascribed to more diligent observations, but I am sure there has been a definite increase in numbers this year.

Blue phase Fulmars have shown a huge increase, with 194 in January, and 116 in August. Totals for the whole year were five only in 1989 and ten in 1990.

The Kittiwake count again shows a very large increase, the highest monthly counts being an average of 174 per day in January, and 157 per day in March.

No new species have been reported this year, nor has there been any report of oiled birds.

A ringed Kittiwake has been reported, with details as follows:- 22 Aug'91. Position 55°51'N 20°32'W. The bird was an immature, changing to adult plumage, and landed on foc'sle rail. The right leg had three rings - yellow, purple, orange; left leg two rings - Grey, green.

If anyone recognises these markings, I should be grateful if they would contact RNBWS, giving details of where and when the bird was ringed. The information will be passed on to OWS *Cumulus*.

I must thank the Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus*, for their continuing efforts in providing this interesting data.

Summary of Seabird Sightings, Station LIMA (57°N 20°W)

Month 1991	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation days (304)	27	23	21	25	26	23	25	31	25	26	25	27
Fulmar	x	o	o	o	o	x	o	x	o	x	o	o
Great Shearwater				—				—	+			
Sooty Shearwater				—				—	—	—		
Manx Shearwater				—		—	—	—	—			
British Storm-petrel	—	—								—		
Gannet	—	—	—	—	+	+	+	—	—	—	—	
Great Skua	—		—	+	+	—	—	+	—	—		
Pomarine Skua					+	+	—	—	—			
Arctic Skua				—	—		—	—	—	—		
Long-tailed Skua					—				—			
Herring Gull						+	+					
Lesser Black-backed Gull	+	—	+	+	+	+	—	+	+	—	—	
Greater Black-backed Gull	+	+	+	+	+	+	—	+	+	—	—	
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—							—	—	—
Iceland Gull					—							
Kittiwake	x	x	x	x	o	o	+	x	x	x	o	o
Black-headed Gull							—					
Arctic Tern						—	—	+	—		-	
Common Tern										—		
Little Auk	—		—	—								
Guillemot				—	—	—						
Puffin		—										

KEY — Occasional sightings; + Average 1-9 per day; o Average 10-49 per day; x Average 50 or more per day

A Concentration of Great Shearwaters and White-bellied Storm-petrels over the RSA Seamount in the South Atlantic east of Gough Island

by Dr W.R.P.Bourne

Comparatively little attention has been paid to the influence of submarine topography on seabird distribution, although it has become increasingly evident that concentrations of birds may sometimes be found over such phenomena as the edge of the continental shelf. Thus J.R.Grindley (*Ostrich* 38: 281-2) reports that in November up to 1,500 seabirds, mainly Black-browed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophris*, were seen around trawlers on the West Ground near the edge of the continental shelf 50-100nm north-west of Cape Town. Smaller numbers of seven species with a maximum of 27 Cape Pigeons *Daption capense* were recorded over the Vema seamount which rises from 4500m to within 25m of the sea surface, 400nm offshore.

In February 1985 I made regular observations of seabirds from the bridge of RFA *Olna* as she sailed from the vicinity of Cape Agulhas, South Africa, past Gough Island to the Falklands. On the afternoon of the 20th, she passed through a belt of fog associated with a drop in the water temperature of about 3°C, probably lying over the convergence between the subtropical and subantarctic water masses. Early next morning we suddenly passed large flocks of Great Shearwaters and scattered White-bellied Storm-petrels while crossing the RSA Seamount, which rises to within 260m of the surface at approximately 39°S 6°W about 100 miles east of Gough Island. We then saw comparatively few birds again until we passed about 15 miles north of Gough Island during the afternoon.

My observations during this period are summarised in Table 1, and the distribution of the birds over the different zones of surface water in Table 2. It will be seen that most species had a definite preference for one zone of surface water, the more closely allied forms such as the *Procellaria* and *Pterodroma* petrels often occurring over different zones. Only the Wandering Albatross occurred in equal numbers over both of them, while the only Long-tailed Skua was seen over the convergence between them. By far the largest number of Great Shearwaters and to a lesser extent White-bellied Storm-petrels, but little else, were sighted over the RSA Seamount.

It is debatable why these two species should concentrate over the seamount. It does not seem likely that even shearwaters can have been diving down 260m to feed over its surface, but Grindley (*loc. cit.*) observed that British Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* appeared to be catching small organisms resembling euphausiids over the Vema Seamount. He expressed surprise that such vertical migrants should be present at the surface in daylight, and possibly there is upwelling around these obstructions to ocean currents which brings organisms to the surface, and the storm-petrels were feeding on them directly while the shearwaters were taking fish which were also attracted to the area to feed on them.

On the only other occasion when I noticed that we were crossing a seamount, the St Joseph Seamount at 36.6°N 13.9°W in the eastern North Atlantic some 150nm off Cape St Vincent on the morning of 29 April 1960, all there was to be seen was a trawler and a single Cory's Shearwater - though these were the only ones we saw that day. It might be useful if observers were to start watching their charts for irregularities in the sea floor, and routinely looking out to see what can be seen there.

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Table I. Birds seen from RFA *Olna* approaching Gough Island, February 1985

Date	18	19			20		21			
Minutes	150	60	60	60	60	100	70	100	60	70
Lat °S	35.1	35.2	35.6		37.4	fog	RSA	39.8	Gough	40.7
Long°E/W	12.6	10.9	09.7E		03.0W		Smt	06.7	Id	10.3
Water T°C	20.0	20.0	20.0	18.9	17.4	16.7		14.4	14.4	
Penguin										1
Wand A	2	3	4	1		1		2	1	5
Black-b A								2		
Yell-n A	4			4	6			1		
Sooty A								1		4
Prions								818	463	755+
Gt-w P	12	6	3	1						
Atl P								1		
Kerg P									1	88
Soft P P				3			3	19	97	690+
Grey P								1		57
White-c P	6	3	3	2	1					
Cory's S	1									
Great S	2			6			4002	329	39	9
Sooty S						1	1	1		
Little S									1	
Diving-p									1	
Wh-b S-p							83		4	22
Bl-b S-p								1		
Leach S-p		1								
Gt Skua						1	1			1
Long-t S						1				

(Full vernacular and scientific names given in the same order in Table 2)

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF SEABIRDS OVER ZONES OF SURFACE WATER

	A	B	C
Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome*			x
Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*	x	x	x
Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*			x
Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*	xx		x
Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria fusca*			x
Prions *Pachyptila* sp.			xxx
Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*	xx		
Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*			x
Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*			xx
Soft-plumaged Petrels *Pterodromma mollis*	x		xxx
White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*	xx		
Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*			xx
Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*	x		
Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*	x		xxxx
Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*		x	x
Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*			x
White-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta grallaria*			xx
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta tropica*			x
Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*	x		
Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*			x
Great Skua *Catharacta skua*		x	x
Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*		x	

A. Subtropical . B. Convergence C. Subantarctic

SHORT NOTES

SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, MN.

We have again received various reports from Met. Logbooks, thanks to the kindness of the Marine department of the Meteorological Office. This year, most of them have been of landbirds, which have been dealt with elsewhere.

The most unusual report was from **MV *Nedlloyd Tasman***, Captain I.S. Grant, which reported a Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* on board, and supplied an excellent photograph. The vessel was lying at the container terminal at Burnie, Tasmania, on 12 July'91, when the bird was observed resting on the promenade deck. It was possible to watch it through a window at close quarters for some three hours, during which time it seemed quite unperturbed by all the bustle of the operations going on close by. Judging from its bill colour, it was a juvenile. It is most unusual to have an albatross aboard. Unfortunately its arrival was not observed, so it is not known if it landed voluntarily, or crashed into the ship.

R.R.S. *John Biscoe*, Captain C.R. Elliott, reported a Thin-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*, 2.5nm east of Cape Pembroke, Falkland Islands. The bird was caught and eaten by a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, and was identified from its remains. I have had Peregrines and other falcons on board, in various parts of the world, and they seem to be quite content to feed on any small bird that comes to hand.

MV *Craiglas*, Captain C.M. Berkley, reported an immature Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaeton rubricauda*, with pink central tail feathers just showing, aboard in position 24.5°S 88.0°E. Attempts were made to feed it on raw shrimp, bread and water, all of which it ignored. (COMMENT. I have rarely known any seabird, except gulls, to feed on board). It eventually left the following night.

MV *Rost*, Captain E.D. Somes, sent a very nice photograph of a Red-billed Tropicbird *P. aethurus*, taken on board in the Caribbean, 11.7°N 75.7°W. It lunged at anyone approaching, and made a loud hissing noise. It was picked up, wearing a strong pair of gloves - a very wise precaution - and released overboard.

Various other ships reported Tropicbirds, with sketches of varying accuracy and skill.

MV *ACT 7*, Captain A. Cheshire, reported a Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis alba*, in position 46.0°S 53.0°W. This is the third year running that we have had a report of this species in this rather remote area, and it would seem that there must be a good many of them dispersing from the Antarctic every year.

A report was received of a possible Mascarene Petrel *Pterodroma sterrima*, on board 10nm SW of Cape Point, South Africa. Unfortunately the description was not detailed, and I had to tell the reporters that it seemed unlikely, as this previously 'lost' species is not known or expected to occur in this area. The colour of the bill, legs and feet, as well as

plumage, are always useful for identification - if these can be noted.

Many thanks to all those who send in their Met. Logs; they are very much appreciated. I do my best to identify all seabirds reported, as does Commander Casement with the landbirds, and a reply is sent to each ship by the Met. Office.

Captain P.W.G. Chilman, MN., 15 Garbett Way, Bishopthorpe, York, YO2 1SF.

A BIRDWATCHER IN MOD MAIN BUILDING

by Commander P.M. Reynolds, RN

I suppose one could be forgiven for not having high expectations on the ornithological front of an appointment to Main Building - a few pigeons on the windowledge perhaps, and the ornamental ducks in St. James's Park. So it was for me, until I learned what desk I had; 'Rest of the World' it was entitled. Infinite scope for travel, think I. Further research began to open up new horizons to me - mentally, at least - my parish covered the Joint Service garrisons in Hong Kong, Cyprus, Gibraltar, the Falklands and Belize. Well now.... It was quite clearly going to be important for me to learn of their problems at first hand, and my first tour in MOD began.

The Falkland Islands garrison was the one which demanded my immediate attention, its wildlife has probably been more intensively studied - certainly by servicemen - in the last decade than in the previous century. Although a visit to South Georgia eluded me throughout my appointment, the opportunity to observe colonies of Gentoo, Rockhopper and Magellanic Penguins at first hand, and to take advantage of some 'training' flights by the search and rescue (SAR) aircraft to visit some of the more out of the way sites was too good to miss. Close quarter situations with Elephant Seals, Vultures and Striated Caracara give a salutary lesson to a European, in a place where wildlife has not had cause to develop fear of man. One particularly evocative day included a chance to visit the memorial on Sea Lion Island to those lost in HMS *Sheffield*.

On the way back to the UK I had the opportunity to visit one of the beaches in Ascension Island renowned for its turtles. Even on this remote island there is risk of disturbance, and we were most careful to avoid distracting those females intent on their late night egg-laying. For those of us in the navigation business, Ascension is a very small place on which to make a landfall; yet the turtles unerringly find it year after year - and no SATNAV. Feral cats have wrought havoc among the colonies of breeding seabirds, and this remains a problem deserving serious attention from the conservationists.

Belize was my next port of call. What a contrast! It contains some of the least disturbed tracts of virgin forest in the Americas, but even this is now coming under threat from the locals' quest for agricultural land. On any one day, there were at least a dozen fires to be seen on the horizon, as yet more clearings were scorched from the jungle. The wildlife is incredibly rich, both inland and offshore, and principally because Belize has yet to be discovered by any but the most ethnic of

tourists. The Barrier Reef is the second longest in the world (after the Great Barrier Reef) and, apart from holding an excellent Recreation Centre, offers the spectacle of sharks, rays, and that wonderful mammal, the Dugong, in relatively undisturbed habitat. Toucans, hummingbirds, and birds of prey abound, and many of the soldiers have pet parrots. I was quite taken by the pair of Jabiru Storks which, year after year, nested successfully close to the runway at Belize International - directly under the flight-path of airliners and Harrier jets. I had little opportunity to wander in the jungle. Maybe just as well; a previous senior Army officer had almost died, as a result of a bite from a Diamondback snake, whilst doing just that!

Cyprus came next; an island on which one has to search carefully for most of the birds. The mountains around Troodos yielded Peregrine, and one or two other Mediterranean specialities, but my abiding memory is of watching the Griffon Vultures combing the cliffside near Episcopi while I was sunbathing - making sure I moved periodically to let them know that I really was alive!

Gibraltar is well known to most of us at migration time, but it is always a pleasure to witness the raptor movements, and a couple of stolen hours at the top of the Rock are rarely wasted at the right time of the year.

And so back to the pigeons on the windowledge. I never could find a reason to go to Hong Kong. Let me just hope that my resume persuades you that an appointment to Main Building need not necessarily herald the onset of two years ornithological barrenness. It probably wouldn't work out quite this way in Naval Plans.

Commander P.M. Reynolds RN, HMS Neptune, Faslane, Helensburgh, Strathclyde. G84 8HL

LANDBIRD OBSERVATIONS OFF THE NORTHWEST HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

by Captain J.B. Nicholls MN

RV *Farnella* was carrying out oceanographic survey work during September/October 1991, and the following was noted:

The ship had sailed from Honolulu at 0800LMT, on 21 Sep, and a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* was sighted flying round the vessel, when 20nm south of Molokai Island; winds were light and variable. The Owl landed frequently and remained several hours, before leaving towards land (see photo).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* aboard RV *Farnella* 20nm south of Molokai I., Hawaii, 21 September 1991

Photo: Captain John Nicholls MN

On 3 Oct, the ship was in position 29.0°N 174.0°W, 115nm from Pearl and Hermes Atoll, when a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, landed on the mast; from its plumage, it was identified as a juvenile, probably of the North American race. The cere and eye were slate-blue, but the legs and feet were yellow, possibly indicating that the bird was nearing adulthood. It took several short flights around the ship before roosting overnight on the mast. At 1130 next day (4th), after an exercise flight, it caught a Fairy Tern *Gygis alba* in flight. The tern's partner harassed the falcon, trying to make the Peregrine drop its prey, but the falcon chased after the second tern as if attempting to catch it too. The second tern flew away, and the falcon returned to the mast to eat. It first ripped the tern's throat, then ate the eyes and head, before concentrating on the carcass. At 1600 it caught and ate another Fairy Tern. (See photo at page 1.)

At mid-afternoon on 5th, it took an unidentified storm-petrel, and at dusk caught a Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*, which it ate in the illumination of the masthead navigation light. The entire ship's company was impressed with the falcon's hunting ability and speed. The bird finally departed at 0920LMT on 6th, when at 27.7°N 170.7°W - 125nm NE Laysan Island, and 205nm east of where it first arrived.

Captain J.B. Nicholls MN, 138, Tranby Lane, Anlaby, Hull, HU10 7EJ.

IDENTIFICATION OF SEABIRDS FROM WING-MEASUREMENTS

Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*

The original photograph enclosed by Captain Nicholls of the prey devoured by the Peregrine provided an interesting identification problem for WRPB, who wrote that he was reduced to scavenging through garbage bins at bus-stops in Aberdeen to find a King-sized cigarette packet - a ruler would have been simpler!

The calculations worked out as follows:

Length of King-size in photo 20mm, actual length 88mm.

Wing length in photo 51mm.

$$\text{Real wing length} = \frac{51 \times 88}{20} = 224.4\text{mm}$$

Bonin Petrels (8) ave 224.1 (215-230) mm

Newell's Shearwater (4) ave 238.7 (230-245) mm

Wedge-tailed Shearwater (10) ave 295.5 (288-30) mm

The measurements and calculations may not be very accurate but the wing-length is unlikely to exceed 230 mm.

The Bonin Petrel also has a distinctive leading edge to the underwing which is more marked in the most likely alternative — the Black-winged Petrel (see Harrison, plate 25:81).

Therefore Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca* QED.

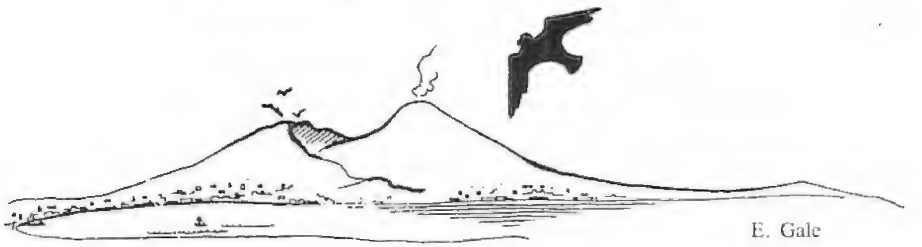
This record is of some interst. According to Pratt, H. D., Bruner, P. L., and Berrett, D. G. 1987. *The Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific* (Princeton University Press) it is a scarce resident in Fiji. Strays which may reach ships at sea may come from either western Micronesia or the Hawaiian group, where it is surprising it is not resident.

COMMENT This incident illustrates the value of preserving wings and taking photographs of unusual birds.

MBC (from WRPB)

A NAPLES HORS D'OEUVRE

by Vice-Admiral Sir David Dobson and others



E. Gale

'In terms of wildlife, Naples and its surrounds never cease to astonish. In an area where urban degradation has reached rock bottom, we stumble across the most remarkable finds: a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* spending much of the winter in Naples, feeding on a rich diet of pigeons and starlings in Piazza Municipio; a Red Admiral butterfly *Vanessa atlanta* flying up the congested Via Monteoliveto during the rush hour one February morning; a Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* singing above the din of the traffic from the magnolia tree in the middle of the famous Piazza Amadeo.'

Thus writes Mark Walters, a young English wildlife enthusiast who introduced me to a tiny but dedicated group of birdwatchers in Naples. True there isn't much encouragement for birdwatching here, in a country where, as far as birds are concerned, size, season and savour mean nothing - everything which flies is shot at - and a country where it is believed that only if you shoot a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* can you be certain not to be cuckolded! Hunters in their hundreds lie in wait for the big migrations, as the birds complete their crossing of the Messina Straits: 'couldn't you send a destroyer to bombard them?' asked my companion.

But in spite of all that, there are some wonderful sites in Italy, and plenty around Naples too. One haven for birds is the huge wooded and secluded crater of Astroni, which for centuries was a royal hunting area, and today is run by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). So is the tiny cratered island of Nisida, where Sophia Loren once was jailed. Here are Mark's notes of our first visit:

NISIDA - A visit 10 May'92: Mark Walters, David Dobson, Lizzie Gale and Giarncarlo.

Access - Over the causeway, park the car opposite the entrance to the Naval Base and then walk up limited access road; best to get permission from NATO/Nisida prison. Quiet road winds up hillside and straightens out when it gets to the prison at the top. A number of look-outs, just before entrance to prison.

Fauna - Many Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Sardinian Warblers *Sylvia melanocephala*, Blackcaps, Serins *Serinus serinus* and Linnets *Acanthis cannabina* - migrating through or breeding: Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, Great Tits *Parus major*, Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*, Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilis*, and Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius*

senator; birds heard but not seen (perhaps Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*). Not many butterflies around (a Red Admiral), but it was pretty early in the morning.

Flora - Many non-native species - *Robinia pseudoacacia*, sumach, eucalyptus - but with a wealth of native species too - Aleppo Pine - pine cones eaten by Edible Dormouse - olives, and at a lower level, helichrysum sticking out of rocks, cranesbill, and what may have been clumps of Sea Wormwood *Artemisia maritima*.

VESUVIUS. Even more rewarding was an early morning walk up Vesuvius, where thousands climb the 1277m conical peak of the volcano, but few go on to explore the nearby Valley of the Giants. This area was a blaze of colour for our visit on 30 June. - Mark, David D, Lizzie and Giancarlo. A beautiful morning after days of intermittent storms. First stop just past the TV relay transmitters (about 400m a.s.l.) promised very well. Species seen as follows:

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solarius* (m), and Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Sparrow *Passer italiae*. Also heard a Nightingale *Luscinia megarhyncos* and a Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* (strangely not reported in this area), some way off. Another stop, about 200m further up, proved even more exciting. We hit upon a most obliging Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* on the top of the lava field, singing from the exposed branches of some low trees. Then more Nightingales and the ubiquitous Sardinian Warblers announced their presence. At various points along the road on the way up we saw Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, a Spotted Flycatcher, a pair of Jays *Garrulus glandarius*, all good breeders up here. The other birds - the Blackcaps and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* - can be heard from sea level to near the top of the vegetation line at 1000m. Just as we were turning up to the car park, we caught a glimpse of a Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* one of several in the broom-dominated landscape near the top. And then a pair of Peregrine Falcons, just as we were starting out on our walk, obviously breeding in a gully on the sides of Monte Somma. The other species, all near the old car park, were as follows: Raven *Corvus corax*, Whitethroat *S. communis*, Tawny Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*, Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Stonechat, Dartford Warbler *S. undata*, Blackbird and Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*. Just as we were leaving, we saw a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, and we learned from Giancarlo that the Italian for 'hover' is 'fare lo spirito santo'.

E. Gale

So far, we have found no evidence of any serious study of Vesuvius or Nisida, and these will probably be the places we shall concentrate on on the coming year, together with forays to look at seabirds. There is cetainly plenty to see and do.

D.S. Dobson, E. Gale, M. Walters, HQ AFSOUTH, Naples, BFPO 8.

ALEUTIAN TERNS REPORTED FROM THE PHILIPPINES

by Dr W.R.P.Bourne

One of the more important outstanding seabird mysteries involves the non-breeding range of the Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*, a bird of the 'comic' type which breeds in small numbers in the summer around the northern shores of the Pacific, but then vanishes between the time it leaves the breeding area after fledging and when it returns again to breed, and thereafter between September and May. While this problem has by no means been solved yet, an important contribution has been made with a report by David S. Lee (*Condor* 94: 276-279) that in May 1984 Peter Cua of Manila collected six, including an adult, a subadult and four first year birds, near Pamilacan Island south of Bohol Island, in the west-central Philippines.

While this may well be the missing winter quarters, in view of the late date it also seems possible that the birds may winter further south in the East Indies or even around New Guinea and northern Australia, and were returning north again, and there is now a need to look out for it throughout this area. The birds had already nearly completed the moult although some of the younger ones still retained old outer primaries. The undescribed first-year 'portlandica' plumage includes a black crown and partial dark ring round the eye, a white forehead extending back above and below the eye to join a white collar and underparts, a grey back with white tips to the feathers, and a grey tail. A bird which may have been two years old was similar with less white on the forehead and a uniform grey back.

Breeding adult Aleutian Terns can be distinguished from the 'comic' terns (Common and Arctic Terns *Sterna hirundo* and *S. paradisaea*) by the presence of a dark bill, legs, and trailing edge to the inner underwing; and a white forehead separated from the white chin by a dark line running from the bill to the eye, as in the Spectacled, Bridled and Sooty Terns *Sterna lunata, S. anaethetus* and *S. fuscata*, though they differ from them in having a greyer belly and a white rump and tail. It now appears that young Aleutian Terns also differ in turn from the adults in having a paler face without the dark line from the bill to the lores, a light collar, a paler back but darker tail, and white underparts. They still differ from Common Terns in lacking darker outer tail-feathers.

Dr W.R.P.Bourne, Department of Zoology, Aberdeen University, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, Scotland

INITIAL SURVEY OF NEW CORAL ISLET OFF DIEGO GARCIA ATOLL

by Lieutenant Commander The Hon. M.C.N. Cochrane, RN

A new small coral islet was surveyed 2-4 October 1991, and a report submitted by the Navigating Officer of HMS *Coventry*, during her 1991 deployment to the Indian Ocean. The name 'Anniversary Island' has been proposed, and the following extracts concern wildlife noted: The island has a breeding colony of Crested Terns *Sterna bergeii*, of which many adults were seen. About 20 one-day old chicks were found on the higher ground, amongst nests containing eggs. The adults were aggressive towards the survey party, and care had to be taken not to tread on eggs and well-camouflaged chicks. Other birds seen in flight, and occasionally on the extremes of the island, included Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, and a pair of White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*. But these were also made unwelcome by the terns.

The report commented on some remarkable corals, and an abundance of fish-life and also evidence of turtles. The island is clearly in its infancy, and the deposits of guano will probably in due course allow the establishment of plants. The strong recommendation was made that Anniversary Island be formally established as a 'Restricted Area', in common with other small islands in the vicinity, in order to allow this uninterrupted development.

Lieutenant Commander M.C.N. Cochrane RN, HMS *Fearless* c/o BFPO Ships, London.

COMMENT. Notes on the Chagos group will be found in *Sea Swallow* 25:11-13 and 32: 42-47, and a full description of the islands in David Bellamy's *Half of Paradise* (Cassell, London, 1979). M.B.C.

'BABY' -
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH A GREAT HORNED OWL

by Captain C.F.B. Hamilton RN

I made the mistake recently of telling my boss my bird story. In short order I discovered that he is the President of the RNBWS and that an article for *Sea Swallow* would be appropriate! Herewith....

I was lucky enough a few years ago to spend two years in Newport, Rhode Island, USA. We lived in a beautiful and secluded spot within a stone's throw of the water and a bird sanctuary. The wildlife and splendid selection of birds became a daily highlight of our lives.

It took me about three months and many dollars to perfect a squirrel-free bird feeder. They ate the first three and overcame at least two guaranteed squirrel-proof varieties. I finally perfected one, but not before seeing them sprint up the side of our house and leap four yards through the air at the final version. On this feeder we watched the whole range of lovely North American birds which included, *inter alia*, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple and House Finches, Common Redpole, Red Cardinal, Blue Jay, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, American Robin, Blackcapped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Downy Woodpecker, Redbreasted Nuthatch, Gray Catbird, Mourning Dove, Common Grackle and, of course, 'Baby'.

One evening in the late autumn I returned home to be greeted by an extraordinary noise. In a fir tree within yards of the house sat a very lovely Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*. For twenty minutes she and I exchanged a variety of hoots until, clearly unimpressed with my response, she swooped away towards the river. She returned the next evening, and indeed every evening for the next three weeks, to give me hooting lessons. Not unnaturally she gave great pleasure to my family, and in particular to my eighteen month old son who was about the same size.

And then late one evening, following our usual dogwatch instruction, I was escorting an elderly couple up an icy drive, in pitch darkness, to their car, when I suddenly heard a gentle WHOOSH and Baby attempted a VSTOL landing on my head. After a moment or two of unsuccessful attempts to respot, she glided off into the night. My guests were of course completely speechless and drove off without so much as a goodbye. I realised instinctively that 'Baby' had decided to introduce herself properly.

In the ensuing six months our new friend became almost petlike. She flew to our feet regularly, used to sit on our car and welcome dinner guests, kept our neighbours' dog at bay, pecked morsels from our son's hand and latterly walked into the house, jumped up onto a sofa and tried to nibble the cushions. On one occasion she flew into our garage and happily accepted a lift out on my arm. On another, she landed on my wife's head while she was carrying our infant! Perhaps it was the fur hat! Often, when she felt ignored, she would perch herself on our sitting room chimney and hoot like mad until we went outside to play.

We discovered that, as an infant some two years previously, she had fallen from her nest and was given to the bird sanctuary where she was named 'Baby' and mothered. After about six months she was returned to the wild, but clearly retained an instinctive bond with humanity.

Noting from her droppings that her diet consisted solely of mice, it seemed to me that she had not entirely developed her killer instinct. She would happily watch the rabbits, squirrels and fox cubs which frolicked in our garden but never threatened them. I therefore attempted to introduce her to squirrels, initially those dispatched by passing cars. These she loved. My attempts to catch a live one were, after many tries, successful but ... have you ever tried to handle one? We never did succeed in offering 'Baby' a live morsel! We do know that she came close to oblivion when she eyed a neighbour's dovecote.

The following summer we moved to a new house further up the same road and thought that if 'Baby' sighted it she would come and see us. A short ride in the back of a station wagon seemed no more than she could handle. Very happy to leap into the back after a morsel was she, but when the tailgate went up I got the noise of an owl suffering from a loss of sense of humour. Attempts were therefore abandoned and eventually we moved. Sadly we did not see her again. Our friends on the avenue regularly update us on her whereabouts and last reports have her living in the grounds of a very smart prep school (where she frightened the life out of a young pupil by trying to land on his head!) and, more importantly, with a mate.

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*

Photo: Captain John Hamilton RN

As you might expect she was well photographed and we have yards of video tape of her showing off. It was a lovely year of birdwatching and I doubt there can be many parts of the world which offer such a variety and profusion of colourful birds.

Captain C.F.B. Hamilton RN, HQNAVSOUTH, BFPO 8.

BEHAVIOUR OF MASKED BOOBIES
- observed on passage between Hong Kong and Singapore

by Captain J.W. Welch MN.

I have often encountered Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra* whilst on passage between Hong Kong and Singapore, particularly when passing between the Paracel islands (Bombay Reef) and the Macclesfield Banks (16°N 113°E approx). This route is continually and heavily used by shipping and there is rarely a time in clear weather when another ship cannot be seen on the horizon.

During two recent passages with *MV.Liverpool Bay*, through this area, in June 1992, I was able to spend some time watching these birds' behaviour, and I discovered they have turned Man's activities to their own advantage: several birds fly in towards the ship from the windward quarter, and use the lift created by the updraft of wind on the ship's side, from aft to forward. They then proceed to dive into the bow waves of the ship, and very successfully catch the displaced flying-fish. I observed them for some time, and caught part of the spectacle with my video camera. There was even a young bird imitating what appeared to be its parents.

I wondered whether this behaviour has been noticed by others trading in this area? It is certainly an interesting spectacle to watch.

Captain J.W. Welch MN, 'Wychwood', 65 Park Road, North Leigh Witney OX8 6SB.

OBITUARIES

Captain P.P.O. Harrison, Master Mariner MN (1908-1991)

It was in 1956 that Captain Harrison became a member of RNBWS, a fortunate event in the Society's history, as he became one of its most experienced and valuable recorders of seabirds.

He was then with the New Zealand Shipping Company, operating across the Pacific from Wellington, New Zealand to Panama, and commanded their very large oil fuel tankers.

The most useful reference book in existence during that period was W.B. Alexander's *Birds of the Ocean*, first published by G. Putman in 1928, with a revised edition in 1962.

Captain Harrison kept a copy of this book, available on the bridge of his ships, together with a seabird logbook in which to record birds seen by his watchkeeping officers and other crew members, whilst his ship was on passage at sea. He himself became an expert on the identification of petrels and shearwater species, in particular. To achieve best examination, he preferred the use of a telescope rather than binoculars, for identification at close quarters.

Apart from articles which he wrote for publication in *Sea Swallow*, he subsequently became the author of his own book *Seabirds of the South Pacific*. This he described as a handbook for passengers and seafarers, containing a dscription of all birds that might be encountered on a voyage from New Zealand to Panama, with notes, illustrations, and a guide to their identification. This was published by H.G. Walters Ltd at Narberth, in Pembrokeshire. He received much helpful advice from well-known ornithologists, such as R.A. Falla of the Dominion Museum in Wellington, Dr W.R.P. Bourne and others. Captain Gerald Tuck, the late Chairman of RNBWS, was instrumental in giving helpful advice, and a guide on the administration side with the printers. The price was kept to a suitable figure - 15 shillings per copy - and Captain Tuck also gave wide publicity to this book amongst individuals and interested organisations. The Seafarers Education Service and College of the Sea (Dr Ronald Hope) also helped to advertise Captain Harrison's book.

In later years, Captain Tuck paid tribute to his practical knowledge of seabirds, when producing his own book *A Guide to Seabirds of Britain and the World*, published by Wm. Collins in 1978. On his retirement from active sea service, Captain Harrison made his home in Margate, Kent, but he never lost interest in the fortunes of RNBWS, and maintained regular contact through the Hon. Secretary, right up to the time of his death, on 2 November 1991.

E.W.S.M.

Major N.A.G.H. Beale RM (1917-1991)

Noel Beale was the originator and founder of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society. In 1946, he wrote the case for a society, and put it to the Admiralty, enlisting the support of prominent ornithologists and senior Naval Officers, including the Duke of Edinburgh. For the first few months until a formal meeting could be convened, he ran the society single-handed. At the first meeting he presented the members with a constitution, rules, and a complete executive council. Over the next fifteen months he issued guidance to members and the first reporting forms, not to mention dealing with the occasional corpse delivered by the postman!

Due to retirement and pressure of work, he was forced to relinquish the posts of Hon. Treasurer and Secretary at the end of 1948. He was elected to the Editorial and Advisory Committee, and served on this until 1956, and was subsequently made a life member for his services, and when this class of membership was abolished he was made an Honorary Member. Noel Beale retained a keen interest in RNBWS, and provided support to the Secretary, as well as generous financial support to the society right up to his death, on 21 December 1991, at the age of 73. With nearly 50 years hindsight one can truthfully say 'he did a good job indeed'.

P.J.S.S.

Captain M.C. Powys Maurice (1934-1992)

It is with great sadness that we record the untimely death, on 23 May, of Michael Powys Maurice, after a mercifully short illness. He joined RNBWS as a cadet at BRNC Dartmouth, where he and I first became close friends, and continued his life-long interest in birds to the very end. He and I shared our first sea-going birdwatching experiences together in the Mediterranean, aboard the cadet training cruiser, HMS *Devonshire*, and his observations from sea are recorded in *Sea Swallows* for many years thereafter. When finally shore-based, he continued to help the cause of RNBWS in many ways, as a staunch friend and support to me personally, and also with the sound advice he offered as Hon. Auditor of our accounts. Both the Hon. Secretary and I will greatly miss his wise counsel.

M.B.C.

British Ornithologists' Union. 1992. *Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland.* Sixth edition. Pp 50. ISBN 0-907446-15-9. British Ornithologists' Union, c/o The Zoological Museum, Tring, Herts. HP23 6AP. £4.95.

This is the latest version of the 'official' check-list of the birds of Britain and Ireland which serves as a record of the species that have been recorded there, the names by which they are known, and the order in which they are listed. This is maintained by the Records Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union in collaboration with the Rarities Committee of *British Birds* magazine, which also prepares an annual report on the occurrence of the rarer species. In common with the lists prepared by similar committees in other countries it thus has an important influence on popular usage for dealing with the birds.

It therefore seems regrettable that most of these national lists take little account of either established usage for, or knowledge of seabirds. Moreover, while in the past the BOU lists were fairly scholarly and gave references justifying innovations, even if these were not always as enlightened as one could wish, the authors have now merely produced what is said to be a temporary stopgap. It includes a bald list of species and races allocated to various categories of occurrence, with a second list of species in small print with columns for recording things seen in an appendix in the back - a ponderous imitation of the little tick-lists now being produced more economically by numerous other organisations for use by 'twitchers'.

Among decisions affecting seabirds, the authors ignore a good many species plausibly seen and sometimes collected or photographed in Britain and Ireland (some of which should be listed in *Birding World* shortly), and appear unaware that there are usually considered to be two races of Black-browed Albatross, and that the bird which regularly visits a nest in Shetland resembles *Diomedea m. melanophris*. A number of vernacular names have also been arbitrarily changed. Some seem harmless, and should help promote a simple stable international vernacular nomenclature: such as Fulmar to Northern Fulmar, all the *Hydrobatidae* to Storm-petrels, Frigate Petrel to White-faced Storm-petrel, Cormorant to Great Cormorant, Shag to European Shag, Kittiwake to Black-legged Kittiwake, White-winged Black Tern to White-winged Tern, Guillemot to Common Guillemot and Puffin to Atlantic Puffin.

But other innovations seem more questionable: the use of Mediterranean Shearwater for *Puffinus yelkouan* is likely to lead to conflict in the literature with the former (and possibly preferable) use of this name for Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. The introduction of European Storm-petrel for the bird formerly known as the (British) Storm-petrel also seems unnecessary, and perhaps Common Storm-petrel, originally used by William MacGillivray in 1852, might be better here. The adoption of the Americanism Mew Gull for the Common Gull also seems frankly unfortunate since 'mew' is an obsolete term for gulls in general, and this name therefore now means 'gull gull'. The introduction of Pallas's Gull instead of the well-established Great Black-headed Gull in an area full of gulls which already have several names could also lead to growing confusion.

It seems clear that marine ornithologists will have to start producing their own check-list.

W.R.P.B.

John Warham, 1990. *The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems*. Pp 440, ISBN 0-12-735420-4. Academic Press, London and San Diego. £28.50.

This is the first part of a thorough review of the massive literature now relating to the albatrosses, fulmars, petrels and storm- and diving-petrels, written by one of the leading field workers. It deals systematically with the main groups and their breeding biology, and ends with a large bibliography and checklist mainly following that by Jouanin & Mougin in the second edition of the first volume of Peters' *Birds of the World*. Another volume should eventually cover their behaviour, voice, energetics, physiology, populations, food, distribution, exploitation, conservation and management. In general it seems accurate, comprehensive, clear, and well-written, and it should immediately become an indispensable tool for the growing army of research workers trying to understand this popular group.

W.R.P.B.

Heinrich L. Bregulla, 1992. *Birds of Vanuatu*. Pp 294, ISBN 0-904614-34-4. Anthony Nelson, Oswestry. £25.

This is a very ambitious book, which aims to provide both a field guide, and also a summary of present knowledge of all 121 species inhabiting the group of volcanic islands in the southwest Pacific, previously known as the New Hebrides.

It contains a check-list and detailed notes on identification, behaviour, habitats and breeding distribution, and is the outcome of the studies over a period of over 20 years, of the young German ornithologist, who travelled throughout the archipelago. There are 24 pages of colour photographs, mostly taken by the author, and illustrations painted by Hilary Forster and Ola Reeve.

Treatment of seabird species is rather thin, and identifications of some are open to question, but as the author himself says in his preface, 'the knowledge of the resident seabirds and common passage migrants in the Vanuatu seas is still incomplete.....'. This is where accurate and detailed reporting by RNBWS members visiting, or passing through the area, can make an important contribution for the future.

This book is not aimed at the casual tourist, but the people of Vanuatu; to educate and demonstrate to them the richness and beauty of their native bird life. It is for use not only outdoors, but in every school and educational establishment, in order to promote a greater local awareness of conservation, and of the species under threat. It certainly deserves to succeed in this. But it also provides an invaluable reference for anyone regularly sailing through these waters, and I shall certainly find it useful to assist me in making comments and identifications on landbird records, which reach me from passing ships.

M.B.C.

Ian J. Strange. *A Field Guide to the Wildlife of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia*. Pp 188, ISBN 0-00-219839-8. Harper Collins, London. £14.99.

This is a very handy little pocket guide to all the wildlife of the Falklands (South Georgia is only nominally included), which is particularly valuable for its inclusion of groups such as the mammals, fish, invertebrates and plants, which have not been covered before.

The information about birds is not as full as that in the books by Robin Woods (notably his latest *Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands* of 1988, which is not mentioned). This is a pity since, in addition to a few omissions, there are a number of new records which are undocumented. These include breeding Royal Penguins *Eudyptes schlegeli*, Northern Giant Petrels *Macronectes halli*, Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta tropica* and 'Common Snipe' *Gallinago gallinago* (actually the Paraguayan Snipe appears to be dimorphic); also vagrant Yellow-eyed Penguin *Megadyptes antipodes*, South Georgia Pintail *Anas georgica*?, Little Nightjar *Caprimulgus parvulus*, and Patagonian and Grey-hooded Sierra-finches *Phrygilus patagonicus* and *P. gayi*. Further details of these would be welcome.

W.R.P.B.

THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY (RNBWS)

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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*; authors do not need to be RNBWS members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate, together with figures and diagrams. Those with facilities to do so, are encouraged to send on diskette (3.5" preferred), **in ASCI format**, together with a print-out.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **1st March.**

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